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of Ontario



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28 September 2017

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41^e législature

Jeudi
28 septembre 2017

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSTRUCTION LIEN
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PRIVILÈGE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act /
Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège
dans l'industrie de la construction.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: It gives me pleasure to finally get up and talk about this bill that we've been waiting almost 20 years for in this province: Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act.

There are basically three parts to the bill:

- the modernization of the Construction Lien Act;
- the introduction of the prompt-payment regime, which I think is the important part; and
- the introduction of a fast dispute resolution process while a project is continuing, the result of which is appealable at the end of the project, either through adjudication or through the court system.

A little history about it: The advocates have been advocating for changes to the Construction Lien Act for more than 20 years, and for prompt payment since 2011, so seven or eight long years that people are actually waiting to get paid on time for the hard work that they do. Whether that is the front-line carpenter, the small contractor, the medium-sized business, they've all been advocating for this for seven or eight years.

I had the opportunity this week, as I'm sure many of you did, to meet with advocates/stakeholders with respect to this bill. I met with COCA and ECAO on Monday, and I'm sure that we'll be meeting with some other prompt-payment advocates when they have their upcoming lobby day while this bill continues to be debated and moves into committee.

So the government, at least from the NDP's perspective, has had plenty of years: You've been in government

for 17 years; people have been advocating for 11 years. In fact, the Minister of Transportation, I believe, when he won his by-election back in 2013, brought forward Bill 69. He became the minister, and it still took five long years to get this bill in front of this Legislature—actually, quicker than many of us ever get our private members' bills into the Legislature, right? Many of us actually have our bills sitting waiting in committees where there aren't even any other bills and the government refuses, for whatever reason, to bring those bills forward. So I'm pleased to see it come forward, but as one stakeholder recently put it—

Interruption.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Is that me?

M^{me} France Gélinas: No.

Ms. Cindy Forster: As one stakeholder recently put it, they are cautiously optimistic that this will actually happen.

Interruption.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Excuse me, can you fix that? I think it's that.

Excuse me, Speaker.

Given how close we are to an election, is this one of these other bills that the government is actually now bringing forward, just seven or eight months before an election, to try and get some votes from this sector?

Anyway, the challenges and the problems that Bill 142 is addressing are not unlike every other problem or issue. There are many sides. There are many groups and individuals pushing for solutions that best serve their interests. Bill 142 amends the Construction Lien Act and is the long-promised follow-up to the review for prompt-payment practices in the construction industry.

The review was done in 2016, *Striking the Balance: Expert Review of Ontario's Construction Lien Act*, authored by Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel. I've heard, when I had the meetings with COCA and others, that they were happy with the review and thought that these two folks really examined the issues that were important to the construction industry. They believe—some of them believe—that this does strike a balance.

Prompt payment is an issue for the construction industry. It refers to the requirement on business or contract owners, usually on construction and infrastructure builds, for fair and reasonable payment terms with their suppliers and throughout the supply chain. COCA told me that in the olden days, many years ago, 30 days used to be the norm for prompt payment, for people to actually pay their bills. That then became 60 days, 90 days, 120 days. In fact, I've even been told by one or two stake-

holders that the government doesn't pay their bills in less time than 90 days or 120 days. The government is actually going to have to comply with this law at the end of the day as well.

Now, Reynolds and Vogel pulled together an expert panel of 15 knowledgeable people to help them with the work. The final report finally was released and seemed to strike a fair and reasonable balance point among the competing stakeholders' interests.

We know that the construction industry represents about 7% of Ontario's workforce—more than 400,000 Ontarians work in construction—and yet delinquent payment in construction is rampant and a growing problem. The trade contractors are commonly forced to wait long periods of time, four months or longer, to get paid for work that has been certified as being complete. In construction projects, just like in residential building, there's a holdback and there are payment periods. But even when the work is signed off as being complete, people are still waiting four months. That doesn't bode well for small and medium-sized businesses that may not have the cash flow of the big developers and builders in this province, and from out of country as well.

Ontario and Canada began to lag behind a majority of other jurisdictions that already have prompt-payment legislation. Forty-nine states in the US already have prompt payment; 31 states have it in place for the private sector. The US federal government has had prompt-payment legislation since 1982, and many European countries all have this legislation in place. So why is it taking so long in this great province of Ontario? Sure, we can pat ourselves on the back today for being the first province in Canada to implement it, but comparatively across the world, we are still lagging behind other countries.

The existing law here in Ontario, the Construction Lien Act, is costly. It's costly: It's in the courts, so we're hiring lawyers and sitting in front of judges to make decisions on whether or not companies should get paid. In the meantime, some of these businesses are actually going out of business because they don't have the cash flow or the ability to stay in business, and sometimes they end up losing their business because of all the money they've had to spend on legal fees trying to get the money that they were duly owed.

The bill only addresses non-payment as opposed to delinquent payment, and the lien rights of many in the industry will expire long before they realize that they will not get paid.

The delinquent payment drives up the cost of construction, I'm told, because now contractors are actually building delinquent payments into the cost of the project. If it's in the private sector, individuals are paying more, and if it's jobs in the public sector, the taxpayers are actually paying more, because the delinquent fees are now included in the costs.

It strains the cash flow for small businesses. Delinquent payment stymies new job creation and restricts investments in apprenticeship training, as the

trade contractors sometimes have to limit their payroll commitments to meet their cash flow expectations. So that affects training of people apprenticing in the construction industry. The construction industry accounts for roughly 40% of all apprenticeships.

Late-payment practices erode competition, the level playing field for all of those who maintain honourable practices and businesses. They are actually put at a disadvantage. It can drive out the small competitors and push prices up.

When I talked to COCA I used an example of what happened in Niagara. It was outside of the construction industry; it was in waste management. We had probably a dozen small waste management contractors working across Niagara, in the various municipalities. Then the region of Niagara took over waste management in a triple majority vote. The first time that they tendered that big contract, they pushed all of the small players out. The company that won the bid put in a low-ball bid. I think it was for a three-year term. Then, at the end of the three-year term, all the small contractors were gone. All the employees were let go from these various small contractors. They weren't able to go out and buy the many pieces of equipment that they would have needed to do a larger area of waste management collection in our municipalities. Then, when the next tender came in three or four years later, it was double the cost of that first low-ball tender which actually forced out many small business operators.

The same thing happens here in the construction industry when you don't have legislation in place to pay people in a timely way such that they can actually keep their business going, can compete for jobs. That, in itself, will create jobs and keep prices down for consumers.

Locally, I can tell you that in my region there are currently two major projects that are in litigation because of lack of prompt payment as contracted. A third project has caused the contractor to claim bankruptcy due to a lack of payment. I'm not going to name them, because they're all in some kind of litigation, but three that I'm aware of, just in Niagara.

An interesting fact is that the entities not paying within the payment terms of the contract—normally 30 days—are in excess of 120 days. Locally, in Niagara, we know that these are repeat offenders that are not paying companies again and again. And they do this because there are gaps in this legislation, gaps that the government has known about for, well, at least seven or eight years—maybe 20 years. Although there's been numerous lobby days on this legislation since I've been here for seven years, the government has chosen to do nothing about it. And who pays? The contractors pay. The employees pay. The families of the people working for these companies sometimes pay, because those workers actually get laid off or there's a work stoppage because they're not paid, and so somebody is not coming home with a paycheque at the end of the week to feed the kids and buy the clothes and pay the hydro bills.

At the end of the day, it's about workers. Everyone who goes to work, we say in health and safety, deserves to come home, and everybody who goes to work deserves to come home with a paycheque and to be paid in a timely manner.

I know the members from Hamilton, all three of the members from the Hamilton ridings, have talked about the Hamilton Ticats stadium. This building—a \$140-million stadium that I think was built around the time of the Pan Am Games—saw some serious delays. Those delays were related to the lack of, or delays in, payments by the lead international contractor. It impacted down the chain until even the individual masonry workers and electricians weren't paid for hundreds of hours that they worked. I don't know if they've been paid to this day.

Another issue that one of the contractors brought to my attention was—the member from Niagara Falls raised the issue of benefits—health and welfare benefits. The big one that gets forgotten in this discussion is that when people are not being paid for contracting work, their case was that not only that the pay is withheld but in fact their benefits and benefit packages are not being taken care of. So this impacts the worker and their spouse and their family members, because suddenly they go to the dentist and guess what? The benefit plan hasn't been paid because that contractor doesn't have the cash flow to actually make those contributions to the benefit plan or to make contributions, perhaps, to the pension plan. So at the end of the day, the workers and their families are being denied health benefits. Here I make my pitch for universal pharmacare. The NDP has certainly been very vocal in the last few months about a universal pharmacare plan if we're elected in 2018—not a plan that applies just to newborns to age 25; a plan that would actually give benefit coverage to every person in this province, regardless of age.

During the committee hearings on the previous prompt-payment bill in 2014, a presenter from Wilkins and associates who was a third-party administrator talked about benefits and pension plans for the Ontario construction industry workers. What they said was that 2013 statistics for Ontario construction trade plans pointed out six things. Some 19% of the contributions due to the health and pension plans were late. So 19% were late, in the construction industry, to the plan administrator. That's a significant number of people if you talk about workers. It's probably close to 80,000 workers whose benefit contributions were late. So hundreds and hundreds of hours were collectively spent by trustees, administrators and their counsels dealing not only with trying to obtain the contributions, these delayed contributions because contractors were not being paid by the big guys, but also with frustrated employees who found that they were without health coverage or that benefit coverage was jeopardized because their contributions to their benefit plans and their pension plans were not received on time.

So there are a few things, Speaker, missing in the bill. I know we'll be going to committee and we'll have the

opportunity to be tabling some amendments that the stakeholders may or may not bring forward, but in terms of the central issue addressed by Bill 142, prompt payment, the bill is a marked improvement and consistent with what we believe the allied trade groups in the construction industry and in caucus have been calling out for.

While the commissioned expert report that Bill 142 is built from does call for and set out what the prompt-payment regime for the construction industry should look like, in keeping with other government legislation we've seen, it does not signal how this schedule would be enforced.

0920

So, as I always say, the proof is in the pudding—the regulations—at the end of the day, right? This is a framework, but until we actually see the regulations—and some of the members talked about regulations yesterday when we were debating another bill here in the House. I think that when bills are coming forward, the members who are sitting here who are elected to represent people should at least have some idea of what those regulations might look like.

The lack of enforcement will also be a big piece here. With so many government measures, this is a critical missing piece. How is the government going to monitor and enforce prompt payment? Are they going to be hiring enforcement officers? Is it going to be strictly a complaint-based system? Those are some of the questions, I believe, that aren't answered. Without enforcement measures laid out explicitly, there is little expectation that the policy will even be effective, and few reasons to celebrate upon affirming that prompt payment, long overdue, is the right thing to do.

I did have some questions that I asked COCA when they were in visiting me this week, because there were concerns raised by other stakeholders about what happens if the adjudication process fails. COCA, which has been quite involved in the process, says that the contractor can still stop work if the adjudication resolution is not complied with. So if the adjudicator orders some specific rules around a project, and orders payment or partial payment, however that works, and it's not complied with, the trade contractor can stop work. Speaker, I am told that at the end of the day, at the end of the job, even with the adjudication process, the contractors will still have the right to go to court to enforce the adjudication ruling, and that the lien rights will still apply.

It seems that most of the stakeholders are satisfied with the bill. We'll be hearing more from them, I'm sure, as we move into the clause-by-clause. I look forward to engaging with them again.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm very supportive of Bill 142. It's good to hear that it sounds like it has support throughout the House.

This is a bill that talks about fairness. I am proud to be part of a government that looks at fairness as something

that we've dedicated ourselves to as a government, as a Liberal Party. It's something that we believe in, and we need to make sure that people are treated fairly when they're involved in business out there in the public.

In my community, for example, I have a gentleman named Steve Michelis—he runs a company called Michelis Spray Foam—and we talk about this issue often. He tells me that within the industry there are many cases where we're talking about tens of thousands of dollars—and this is a small business—that are not paid on time. It does have a ripple effect, not only for his company, but for his suppliers as well. Again, I'm proud to be part of a government that's moving forward on this.

The NDP member from Welland said that we are the first in Canada. For Ontarians, we should be proud that we're the first jurisdiction moving forward on this. I think it complements the other work we're doing around fairness, making sure that we put forward a minimum wage that can provide people with the right type of life to afford, and the dignity they deserve.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has a pharmacare plan for young people 24 and under. The member for Welland talked about the NDP moving forward with a universal plan. If I recall, their plan that they originally proposed limited the amount of drugs that people could actually be eligible for. I'm proud to be part of a government that is really putting—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to speak to Bill 142 and the comments made by the member from Welland. This bill is about jobs, and I hope the members will give me the opportunity to raise an issue related to jobs in my riding. I want to use my time to talk about CAMI automotive and the challenges that the employees are facing. They are out on the picket lines because they are fighting to keep their jobs in Ontario, and I support their efforts.

We make a quality car in Ingersoll because we have a hard-working and skilled workforce, yet those workers are worried the company will move those jobs, in part because of the high costs of doing business in Ontario, including high hydro costs, taxes and red tape. We need to support our local businesses and support the workers at CAMI in their efforts to keep these jobs in Ontario.

I was proud to sign the Canadian-made flag when I was at the picket line Tuesday morning. While we, as MPPs, are not part of the contract negotiations, government should be doing everything they can to keep the jobs in Ontario. Despite raising it in the Legislature multiple times, the government still has not taken action to address these problems. I want to again ask the government to address the high cost of doing business in Ontario for the employees at CAMI and the 1,300 people in Oxford impacted by layoffs taking place in the riding. We need to address these costs and red tape to keep businesses and jobs—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. The next time I get up, someone is going to be warned. I just

want to remind everybody we want it to be a respectful discussion.

I return to the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to again say to the workers that I will continue to support our local employees, fight for government policies that keep jobs in Ontario and remind people about the importance of keeping our local businesses and the people they employ.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Madam Speaker.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess, like most of my colleagues, I had the pleasure to welcome Denis Shank and a number of other people representing the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, better known as COCA, on Monday this week. They have been coming to see me faithfully every year for the last 10 years with one single issue. Their one single issue is prompt-payment legislation. I cannot believe, with all of the different renditions of this bill that we have been debating, with all of the talking to the stakeholders in consultation and engagement and everything else you want to call it, that we have not done this yet. I think it is up to us in this Legislature to make sure that it finally happens for all of the reasons that we have heard.

We all have small businesses in our ridings. We all have small businesses who tell us that they feel like they are the ones who end up paying for the mistakes of the big ones. They are the ones at the end of the payment chain—we sometimes say the food chain—but they are at the end of the payment chain and they are the ones who don't get paid.

I must say, Speaker, that the government of Ontario is one of the culprits. They are part of those giant payers who take a very long time making sure that they pay for work that has been done in construction. Let's face it: We hear about infrastructure development all the time. What does that mean? That means construction. That means that you will have to pay for what has been built and constructed, yet we don't have prompt-payment legislation, and business after business goes bankrupt through no fault of their own but because they don't get paid.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciate the member from Welland speaking to this very important bill. I think she made some very good points, unlike the Conservatives, who refuse to acknowledge the importance of this bill. I just wanted to thank everybody who has been working on this. We're talking about 60 key interest groups across the province involved in this legislation. I know there's been an advisory committee set up by Sharon Vogel and Bruce Reynolds. I know a friend of mine, Jeffrey Long, a lawyer with Koskie Minsky, has been in the working group.

It is extremely complex, as you're dealing with a vast variety of construction companies, legal entities, associations and construction groups. It is extremely convoluted.

0930

That's why to try and get some kind of an agreement, a consensus, has been extremely challenging, because everybody has a difference of opinion. But because of the hard work done behind the scenes—and I want to thank the Attorney General for taking an interest in this; nobody wanted to touch this because it's so complex—finally we have something here that hopefully will work, because it is needed, because we can't keep litigating.

As you know, it's not only the big construction companies. There's sort of a culture of litigation that's developed because a lot of people, sadly to say, don't appreciate the work that construction people do, whether it's a plumber or a carpenter. They say, "Oh, well, you didn't do a good enough job." They don't realize that these men and women who are laying tiles or working on roofs and all this kind of—they're sometimes risking their life, even. Sometimes a lot of small proprietors or homeowners will say, "I don't want to pay that person," because they don't appreciate the blood, sweat and tears that go into construction.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the members for their comments. I want to start, though, with the member from Oxford's comments about CAMI. It wasn't all that long ago, when we were talking in here about investing in the auto industry, that we heard from PC members here provincially that we should just let the auto industry die and that we shouldn't be doing any investment. We're hearing—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're hearing from the PC MP federally that he's getting a lot of heat about the CAMI strike because he's not out there supporting it.

To the Minister of Children and Youth Services, with respect to their government's fairness—and this keeps in line with the other fairness things they're doing. Well, I want to go back to Bill 148, because, in fact, the government is discriminating against large groups of workers with their continued exemptions of people under the Employment Standards Act: equal pay for equal work, but only for temporary workers, which is long overdue, but there are lots of people working in lots of sectors who do not get equal pay for equal work; card-check certification, only for three sectors—in addition to the construction industry, when everyone was calling for card-check certification; the same minimum wage for every worker in the province, whether you're a student or under 18. So when the government says that they're actually being fair, they are not being fair.

To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Nickel Belt, I thank you for your comments. We need to move forward with this construction lien process, the prompt payment, and I look forward to seeing it in committee.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'll keep a close eye on the clock. I have 20 minutes and, really, a very complex piece of legislation. I'll try to work my way through it. I'll keep an eye on the clock so I don't go over.

I rise today to debate a bill that, if passed, would support workers and businesses in Ontario's construction sector. The Attorney General told this House last week when he spoke that the construction industry plays a key role in helping Ontario's economy thrive. There are more than 400,000 workers in the construction industry, and that accounts for almost 7% of Ontario's GDP. That's quite significant. The construction industry, in many ways, provides a solid foundation for our economy. It builds Ontario up, and it's what keeps our economy thriving day after day, month after month, year after year. That's why this bill is so vitally important.

If passed, our proposed changes will be the biggest changes in Ontario's construction industry in over 30 years. These changes are quite important and, as I said, over 30 years in the making. Our proposal would update our construction laws to align with the best practices offered in many other international jurisdictions. That will create a better, fairer climate for businesses here at home and could help ensure that each and every worker on a project is paid on time, which means that they, in turn, can support their families.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the construction sector for a minute. To recap what Minister Naqvi said to the House two weeks ago: Ontario's construction sector operates like a pyramid. The owner or developer enters into agreements with one or more general contractors. These contractors enter into agreements with sub-contractors to work on different parts of the project, and so the downward flow continues as these subcontractors hire workers and suppliers to help them meet their own obligations. So, if you mapped it all out on a piece of paper, it would look something like a pyramid, with the owner or developer on the top and contractors and sub-contractors, and their subcontractors, branching outward and downward. The payment process would flow down the same route; that's why we call it a pyramid. The owner or developer gets paid, and the money then flows downward, changing hands until everyone on the project has been paid.

When a company doesn't get paid for their work, the downward flow stops short. Contractors don't get paid, and they can't pay people they've hired either. So this lack of payment affects cash flow, which affects payroll and delays payments needed for trade workers, suppliers and everyone else who has worked on the project. That can be devastating to workers and their families.

Working in construction can be tough; it's mentally and physically exhausting, this field of work. What happens after a long day and after a long week when there's no paycheque? You can imagine it's not a good situation, and workers are frustrated. It's just not right, and our government wants to do something about it to make sure that everyone gets paid down the pyramid

model. So we're doing something about it, Madam Speaker.

Our government introduced a way to make sure our construction laws are up to date and reflect today's realities. We have a way to stand up for the needs of Ontario's workers and businesses. If passed, the proposed Construction Lien Amendment Act would modernize construction laws to make payments and adjudication processes fairer and simpler, and work better for businesses, their employees and their families who are depending on them. That's why this bill is so important.

Madam Speaker, the Construction Lien Act was created in 1983. That's well over 30 years ago, and 30 years ago the world was much different. Business was conducted with a handshake; your word was your bond. A lot has changed since then. In 1983, contractors figuring out the cost of a project would bring out their desk calculators and slide rules so they could give their customers an estimate of what the price of the project would be. Plans were drawn up on blueprints. These, of course, were huge rolls of paper covered in meticulous drawings and figures. And project schedules were developed manually, with dates marked in pencil on a calendar and then rubbed out as things changed. There was no construction estimating software. There were no digital building plans. In fact, computers were just basically starting out at that time period. In the past 30 years the world has changed; we have changed too.

The construction laws that worked for the industry back then aren't what we need today. Construction projects and payment processes have become more and more complex, and late payments are a problem in every sector of the industry. The increased complexity of construction projects also means that resolving disputes takes more time than ever. It can sometimes take years before people see the money owed to them. That means a lot of families have to put their plans on hold, in some cases indefinitely. Frankly, this is no way to conduct business.

Over the past decade, Madam Speaker, we received several proposals from stakeholders about how to change the Construction Lien Act. While everyone agreed that there were things that needed to be changed in the act, it had always been difficult to reach consensus on exactly what changes needed to be made, which in large part can be attributed to the diversity of the industry. That's why, in 2014, we announced that we would launch an independent review of the Construction Lien Act, including how we could address payment issues in the construction industry.

In February 2015, we retained Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel, both of whom are leading experts in construction law at the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais, to head up this review. We made it clear to them that they needed to get this seemingly impossible job done. I'm pleased to say that they did it. After much research and consultation, Bruce and Sharon helped to reach a broad consensus on three core issues regarding this bill:

(1) Maintaining and modernizing the lien and holdback process;

(2) Establishing a new system for prompt payment; and

(3) Creating a targeted adjudication system to resolve these disputes.

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They landed on a plan for a way forward and worked closely with an advisory group of dozens of stakeholders to develop a report that had a concrete, workable solution to reform Ontario's construction legislation. One year ago, we released their report titled *Striking the Balance: Expert Review of Ontario's Construction Lien Act*. *Balance* is absolutely the right word for this report, because its recommendations carefully weighed the many, many competing interests across the construction industry.

Our bill includes some key amendments that will modernize construction lien and holdback rules. Our stakeholders recognize the difficulties with the holdback process, as they agree that maintaining a fund for liens that can be claimed is important. But that same holdback process could also reduce the speed in which the payment flows down the construction pyramid. So, Madam Speaker, we want to ensure holdback fees are paid out as soon as the deadline to file construction liens against the project has passed or the lien claims have been resolved.

Contractors and subcontractors should be able to count on getting paid when they should get paid and know that they can meet their downward payment obligations in a timely manner, so they can pay the people that they employ below them in the pyramid scheme.

This new bill would also require surety bonds to be posted on public projects above a certain dollar amount. These bonds are currently used on both public and private projects. There is no legislation that mandates contractors to post them, so mandatory surety bonds would protect subcontractors and suppliers and make sure they get paid in case a project becomes insolvent.

We also heard that contractors and subcontractors want more time to resolve disputes out of court and avoid additional legal fees. We propose that we expand the timeline for filing liens and starting court actions from 90 to 150 days instead. We are also proposing that specific bookkeeping requirements are set out to better protect subcontractors if a contractor becomes insolvent. In this way, we are trying to ensure that the payment process down the pyramid continues uninterrupted.

The proposed changes would also ensure that the legislation reflects the structure of large public-private projects. Madam Speaker, we know that people want to spend as little time and money as possible resolving their construction lien claims. That's why we're proposing that the construction lien claims under \$25,000 be resolved in small claims courts instead of going to larger, higher courts. We think this will speed up the dispute resolution process and make it as cost-effective as possible.

Finally, we are proposing that we change the name of the Construction Lien Act to be called, instead, the Construction Act, to reflect the broader range of issues it covers.

I'm just going to take a break here for a minute. Keeping my eye on the clock there.

Late payment is one of the most pressing issues facing the construction sector today. When a company does not get paid for work, it sets off a chain reaction that affects its own payroll and the payment it needs to make to others. This can be devastating for workers, for businesses and for the entire project. Under the proposed legislation, the deadline for making a payment will be triggered by the first submission of a proper invoice, which would clearly state information like the amount owing and the payment terms, and invoices would be submitted monthly unless the parties set out different arrangements for their contracts. So we're creating more rules to make sure that the money flows down and payment is made properly.

These changes would mean that both parties must negotiate and set out details before actual work has even begun. But if you can't agree on payment timelines, both parties will have to follow the timeline for payments set out in the legislation. The legislation will act as a guiding way to make sure that the payments flow through properly.

For instance, once an invoice has been submitted to the contractor, the owner would be required to pay the contractor within 28 days. We have a solid number: 28 days, or 4 weeks, to pay that amount. That contractor must then pay his subcontractors within seven days of receiving the payment. And these subcontractors need to pay their subcontractors within seven days as well.

We're setting out definite dates by which to pay the subcontractors that go below other contractors. This will help ensure that funds are not held back at the top and everyone is paid in a timely manner. Knowing exactly when to expect payment allows contractors and suppliers to run their businesses more effectively, make more competitive bids and meet their financial responsibilities in a timely fashion.

In the event that an owner or contractor fails to make a payment, mandatory interest would be added to the amount owed. Owners will be able to dispute an invoice by notifying the contractor within 14 days of any amounts that will be withheld from payment. If the parties don't reach an agreement at that point, the contractor could refer the case to a new construction dispute interim adjudication system. This is new. We're creating this new construction dispute interim adjudication system. I think it's quite important to our new legislation.

This brings me to the next major part of the bill. Adjudication is a critical part of the prompt-payment system. It is the key to speeding up the dispute resolution process as well as enforcing the process. It also gives owners the ability to dispute invoices when they feel there is a problem with work done on a project or the amount owed to them.

Those in the construction industry who have experience in litigation, particularly on large or complex projects, will understand the time and investment that are all too often involved in resolving a dispute in court. In some cases, the process to get to trial can take up to a

year. The new system we are proposing, if passed, will mark a dramatic change to the industry. While today it can take a year to get to trial, under the proposed legislation a qualified expert will look at the issue and provide an interim decision in just six weeks. Six weeks is a lot better than a full year—I think, again, another major change by introducing this new six-week timeline into the legislation.

Once an adjudication is finished, the parties can then decide if they want to take the issue to court or if they want to treat the six-week decision as a final decision. This adjudication system means that the parties do not have to wait for the issue to move through the court system that presently exists right now. The six-week decision can be binding, and if they want to stick to that decision, they can; it's up to them. They can continue to work on the project without delay. If the result of the adjudication is that the owner must pay and the owner then refuses, the case may still go to court. But in the meantime, the contractor would have the right to suspend work.

As you can see, we tried to make sure everyone's interests are covered with the proposed amendments that maintain a sense of fairness and balance. It has taken 34 years to get to this stage, to finally get legislation that works to make various parties happy and to agree on a new system of operating construction in Ontario. It's important that we get every aspect of this proposed legislation right.

Should this bill move forward to the committee stage, which I hope it will, we look forward to further input and ideas from stakeholders to make this new legislation even better. We're not ramming this bill down the Legislature; we're saying, "Let's go to committee and hear from other stakeholders, or the same stakeholders, to make the new legislation better or make amendments to the legislation." If this bill passes, we look forward to seeing the difference it will make to the hundreds of thousands of people and families in Ontario supported by this critical sector.

I want to just say, in closing, that we need to update our laws to support the thousands of workers and their families who rely on the construction industry as a key source of their income. The changes we're proposing to this bill, which has been two years in the making, will have an impact on nearly everyone involved in a construction project, from the companies that are involved on large, multi-million-dollar construction projects to the families doing small-scale renovations of their homes.

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When I think of my riding of Scarborough Southwest, Madam Speaker, in my area there are both large, multi-million dollar construction projects and also smaller projects such as renovations being done on homes. Anything in this area will be covered by this legislation. I can tell you, there's a lot of very large condominiums being built across the city, but a lot being built in Scarborough Southwest. When I commute back and forth from work, especially, I can see the construction going on, whether it be condominiums or people who want to invest more in

their property and make changes or renovations to their home and decide to hire contractors to do the work.

So this represents the biggest proposed change for Ontario's construction industry in over 30 years, and it marks the first-ever time industry stakeholders have reached a consensus on key issues such as modernizing lien and holdback rules, prompt payment and adjudication. This alone is a significant milestone.

Of course, our work is not yet done. We will need the continued support and advice of our stakeholders at the committee stage and will be making refinements based on their input. It's important because, as we work through this process with this very complex legislation, dealing with so many parties at one time, we want to make sure that we hear from the stakeholders at the committee stage—as we usually do, having them make presentations or submissions; some can be written instead of oral—and we listen and then, after we've heard from everybody, we then decide to go clause-by-clause through the legislation and, if necessary, make changes to the legislation, which I think is very important. Our government is aware of that. We're not saying this legislation is carved in stone and that we're just going to go forward and put this through. I think it's very important that we hear from the stakeholders and make changes if necessary.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to our continued work to ensure that our construction sector thrives and drives our economy forward, so I'm glad to hear the members speak today. I think all three parties are basically on the same page. We agree that we have to make changes to the construction industry and the Construction Lien Act. I think it's very significant that the new bill will be called the Construction Act so people understand that here are the rules in Ontario for construction. Again, that's a very important thing for this bill.

I've been listening throughout the debate on this bill as various people get up and speak, and I'm happy to hear that they are in agreement with the bill, for the most part. Again, there could be changes. I keep repeating this, but it's important that we're open to changes from stakeholders and those who present. The parties will have input at that point, at the committee stage, and then we can bring this back up for third reading.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker—I actually fit it in with a few seconds left.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to hear the member from Scarborough Southwest speak about the government's willingness to entertain amendments to the legislation before us. Not unlike other members of the chamber, I've had the occasion to consult with members of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. I wanted to share some of their input. There is a need for greater flexibility of timelines to reflect the very size and scope of projects in the industry.

Turning to the proposed adjudicative system, in particular, Speaker, both those bodies are concerned about written decisions of adjudicators that would be

provided to the parties involved, but would not be made public, thus leaving no body of case law to help or assist in future disputes. I know that there's a willingness on all sides of this chamber to have transparency and openness, but lacking some clarity in that particular area is a bit of an impediment.

They also raised with me, Speaker, that there's no ability to appeal adjudicative decisions, but they may still take a case to court, and there's no requirement to report back to the House regarding the activities or outcomes resulting from the decisions of the authorized nominating authority. Once again, that turns to openness and transparency, and I think we all want to work through to that aspect.

Lastly, both parties raised with me that this is the third time that the legislation is before the House and they hope that there will be a willingness on all sides of this House to proceed with speed to move forward because, not unlike the other speakers before me, there's—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a pleasure to rise on Bill 142 to talk about this particular bill. Some of the examples of why we need a bill—it's hard to believe you need a bill to get paid in the province of Ontario, but that's where we're at when it comes to construction.

Take a look at the Hamilton Ticats stadium, which went to an international company; I believe it was out of Spain, which made no sense to me. It wasn't a local company here in Ontario. I can't believe that somebody in Ontario couldn't have built the Hamilton Ticats stadium. But what happened there is that the workers didn't get paid. Electricians didn't get paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for the project. There were delays, there were safety issues. There were all kinds of problems with the Hamilton Ticats thing.

Then what happened is, when they went to have their sons or daughters or wives go to get a prescription, their benefits weren't paid as well. Not only didn't they get paid for performing the work they did—their expert work—they didn't have their benefits paid.

Then we had an incident—and it wasn't just in this particular incident—where somebody was retiring on July 1. So he retired, expecting they were paying for his pension. Guess what? They didn't pay his pension either. So now he was out of a job and he wasn't getting his pension because the company didn't put the contributions into his pension and benefits. That's happening in Ontario.

I'm going to use my last 30 seconds here to talk about the CAMI workers, Unifor Local 88. I want to congratulate the leadership and their members for standing up for jobs in the province of Ontario.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: We should clap about that because they're standing up for all of us.

I'm going to tell you, nothing makes me more upset than listening to the PC Party stand up and talk about autoworkers. That's wrong. When I was at the bargaining

table, they said very clearly, “Let the auto industry die. We don’t pick winners and losers.” So don’t stand up today and say you care about the suppliers and you care about the workers at CAMI.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to you. I’d like to tell you that members of the construction industry who were here the other day are very pleased with this. One of the very first meetings that I had after I was elected was with groups from COCA that came to talk about this very issue. Late payment may not affect the very first person at the top of the scale, but by the time it trickles down, unfortunately, small businesses, usually small local businesses, don’t have the ability to get money to pay their workers or they have to go to the bank and borrow money and it costs them money. They don’t have the cash flow and that is unfortunate. No one should have to go without their paycheque. That is wrong.

Also, big companies are waiting to pay perhaps the union dues or, as a colleague said, the benefits. Those things have to be paid by a certain time. One union told me that it’s over a million dollars that a business would have to pay. That is not fair that they have to arrange for financing and pay for that lateness.

I believe that there are many, many parts of this bill that will be a great improvement for the workers of Ontario. I thank the minister for working so hard on this and on behalf of all the workers in Barrie.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to speak to this. I believe this is at least the third time this bill has come to the House and it’s very important, particularly for those small contractors.

It really comes down to people. If they’re held back from getting their payment, those people who are actually getting their livelihood to be able to provide for their families, they are severely impacted, so I’m hopeful this will go through.

It’s very daunting. What I hear from a lot of small business people is that that environment—when you take something like the lack of prompt payment, so they’re not getting their cash flow coming through, and then you add on the hydro rates—300% to 400% increases under this Liberal government—it makes it very daunting.

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They start to talk to me a little bit about when you’re going to sell Hydro One and lose that opportunity and the rates are going to go up. They talk about things like the Fair Hydro Act, where they borrowed \$25 billion, which is going to cost our economy between \$45 billion and \$93 billion. That’s another cost that’s going to be added on to their business. So how do they stay competitive? How do they continue to go?

The potential of a 32% increase to minimum wage—and again, no one on this side of the House is arguing that people don’t need, certainly, a minimum wage to

survive on, but to put a 32% increase in in 18 months—we hear continually that this government is out of touch and they are moving too fast.

They talk about amendments, and it’s interesting when they say, “We’re happy to listen to amendments, and we’ll make amendments.”

Madam Speaker, with the Green Energy Act, if we recall, they usurped all power from local authorities, from municipally elected officials, to actually make decisions in their community, and they’re the closest to the people.

I have sat through various committees where the—I think for one we had 52 amendments that we put forward, and the government did not accept a single one. So the trust factor of a government that says, “We will work with you. We’ll bring amendments. We’ll be willing to work with you”—that trust capacity has been lost, not only in this House, but across the greater province. Many of the business people and individuals out there are saying to me, “We’re struggling to trust a government that keeps telling us one thing but does the exact opposite.”

It’s harder to live in Ontario under this Liberal government, and this prompt-payment act hopefully will help at least our small businesses.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to thank the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Niagara Falls, Barrie and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa mentioned the decisions being kept secret. Again, the point that I was trying to hammer several times is that we still want to hear from stakeholders as this process continues. When I spoke, I mentioned that we hired lawyers to look into this, and they came up with a report, and from that we worked on the proper legislation that we thought would make all sides happy, the people who are involved in the construction industry. So if there’s something secret about it—I mean, we can discuss it at committee.

The member from Niagara Falls: Hopefully a new system will prevent companies from Spain or elsewhere from just building something and then running away and not paying them back. Hopefully the holdback provisions here will keep the money in Canada, or in Ontario at least.

I echo the same remark that the member from Barrie said: The stakeholders, I think, are happy, for the most part. You’ve got different parties together here that are happy.

Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: We do want to hear from stakeholders. I’ve been here for quite a while, and I’ve been on committees, and I’ve seen changes made on all kinds of legislation. We want to hear some more from the stakeholders. I think there will probably be some discussion about changes. It’s very complex.

I’m looking forward to this second reading debate to be finished and taken to committee. I look forward to discussing it at committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I’m now required to interrupt the

proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: We wish debate to continue.

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

I recognize the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's a huge pleasure to see you in the chair this morning.

What a beautiful morning it is today. After the July-like weather we've had for a few days—of course, we're grateful for it as well, but we'll pay for it in January—it is a bit of a pleasure to wake up this morning and walk to Queen's Park with that hint of the fall season in the air, with a little bit of a nip in the air, and to come here and participate in debate in this beautiful House, in this esteemed House, and to be able to contribute to debate for Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act, 2017.

This act impacts the Condominium Act, 1998; the Construction Lien Act; the Courts of Justice Act; the Land Titles Act; the Limitations Act, 2002; the Mining Act; the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act; the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015; the Registry Act; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

On behalf of the constituents of Niagara West—Glanbrook, it's great to be able to speak to an issue that has a huge amount of impact not only in Niagara West—Glanbrook, not simply the broader province, but really the broader country to an enormous extent. This is an issue that I've indeed had personal experience with. I had the opportunity to see the negative impact of delayed payment in my own past career. To be able to stand today and speak to this legislation is a real pleasure and something that I hope my constituents will be able to benefit from as well.

In the past, before I was elected, I worked not only in federal politics but also in demolition and excavating, as well as landscaping and framing prior to that point, throughout high school, during summers and a little bit part-time as well. I had the opportunity to work in the construction industry, where I saw the negative impact that delayed payment had on the enormous amount of small business owners in the construction industry specifically.

The negative impacts have not been overblown in debate here today. In fact, if anything, I would say that negative impact has been perhaps underrepresented—not intentionally, but I think that when we sit here in this place, sometimes these issues seem a bit distant to us, and we may not always be able to realize how impactful they are on a husband, a father or a mother, a wife who is a business owner and is working very, very hard to make a go of a small company—perhaps a framing company

such as the one I worked for, or a small excavating company such as another one I worked for.

The reality is that when this payment is delayed—as it often is, unfortunately, for extended periods of time—it has a negative impact on the cash flow of that business, which has a huge impact on the ability of that business to continue with production, to continue with paying their employees. In fact, I've been in a situation myself where I was in a very close relationship with my employer and he asked me if I would be willing to wait for my paycheque a couple of extra weeks, because he was waiting on cheques from companies that he was subcontracting for. I've been in a situation where this had a very real impact on me in a very personal way and I can definitely understand the concerns of the construction industry when it comes to delayed payment.

I appreciated the chance earlier this week to meet briefly with COCA, as I'm sure many members in this House did, and had a chance to speak with some of those members and the organizations they represent in a broad variety of fields with a wide variety of expertise. I really do appreciate all of the significant work they put into meeting with members of provincial Parliament here in the Ontario Legislature to brief them about what the struggles are in the construction industry, not only on this issue but on a wide variety of issues.

I wanted to speak very briefly, before we get into the nitty-gritty of this legislation, what it entails, what the positive aspects are and where areas are where, perhaps, I could make a couple of suggestions to the government—I did want to note that this isn't the first time that this legislation has been debated here in the House. This isn't the first time that people have brought forward the reality that delayed payment has a negative impact. This isn't the first time: Prior Liberal governments have claimed to want to solve this issue. I'm not denigrating their desire to help the construction industry, but it is the third time that we've come to this place, that we've had this debate, and then the legislation didn't go through the House, with both past attempts unfortunately dying on the order table due to elections being called by the Liberal government.

I don't wish to be pessimistic, but with another election on the horizon, there is a possibility for history to repeat itself once again. I'm sure that we wouldn't wish to see this worthy endeavour die on the order paper. I don't wish to be rude and I don't wish to indulge in floccinaucinihilipilification, but it is indeed a possibility and one that I think we have to be aware of, that this legislation wouldn't go through the House in a speedy manner. But I hope we do see it go through in a very speedy manner.

The PC Party has long been a strong advocate, a long-time advocate and passionate advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario, because we recognize the impact that this has on small business and, really, larger businesses as well. We recognize that the impact this has is not simply business in a broad sense but really on individuals in their day-to-day, as my own personal experience testifies to, being able to have that paycheque

come through and being able to count on reliable payment for services rendered, for goods provided.

This bill contains three major components, with the first part being the prompt-payment regime, part 2 containing the creation of the authorized nominating authority to manage the new adjudication model created under this act, and part 3 outlining the adjudicative process, and I'll get to that in a couple of minutes. I still do have some time.

I wanted to very briefly touch on a report that was put forward a couple of years ago by Prism Economics and Analysis. They spoke, in 2013, about the need for prompt-payment legislation in the construction industry. Allow me, Madam Speaker, if you will, the opportunity to contribute to debate today with some brief readings from this report. This report, I think, is very informative on some of the concerns that the association and the Ontario General Contractors Association as well as the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada have had with delayed payment, with some of their concerns and the need for prompt-payment legislation.

I'll read from page 3 very briefly, where it states:

"Late payment practices are an important issue for the Ontario construction industry. These practices have negative consequences for the construction industry and for the broader economy, including:

"—reduced employment in the construction industry,

"—less investment in apprenticeship,

"—greater use of 'independent operators',

"—less investment in machinery and equipment and hence lower productivity,

"—higher construction costs because of the need to factor in late payment risk,

"—smaller bidding pools because payment risk forces contractors to limit the amount of work they take on, and

"—an erosion of the principle of a level playing field by rewarding those contractors that delay payments without justification while penalizing those contractors who are forced to cope with late payments."

I think we can all agree that those are some significant issues that are brought forward in this report. The report goes into quite a significant amount of detail. It's 44 pages, and I would encourage members in this House, and especially those who take the opportunity to study this legislation in committee, to perhaps download a copy of this report, to read it through for themselves. It lays out very simply, but also in great detail, the unique structure of the construction industry that serves to amplify the consequences of late payment and how the construction industry is very distinct from other industries because of its complex system of contracting and subcontracting, which maximizes the benefits of specialization—but also, due to function, this system of contracting and subcontracting requires that cash flow through many levels of a pyramid structure. Obviously, any delay in the payment of that cash flow or any blockage in the cash flow structure has an immediate and negative impact on a lot of people who it fails to fall through to as well. Anywhere an interruption in the pay-

ment flow is created, this has a cascading effect down the rest of the contracting and subcontracting chain.

What this bill will do is create—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Darryl and Cassandra Smith, who are joining us. Darryl is on the board of directors at Sonshine Daycare in Mount Brydges and Cassandra works at Sonshine Daycare, a wonderful daycare facility in Mount Brydges, Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce the parents of page captain Rachel McNeilly this morning. We have Kerry and Kevin Lehmann. They're sitting in the gallery here, and we're all going to have lunch together after question period. Welcome to question period and Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my privilege to welcome members from LawPRO. They were here this morning: Ray Leclair and Dan Pinnington. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Page captain Adam Pariag has a number of members of his family here today in the members' east gallery: his parents, Rayanna and Jeffrey Pariag; his sister, Sarah Pariag; grandmother Zoreena Abas; and grandparents Lucia and David Pariag. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us today from Cobourg, Ontario is Kristen Ellison, and also Rebecca Darwent, who is my new policy person at the ministry. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today, I would like to welcome three guests from my riding of Barrie to Queen's Park: The amazing Zach Hofer, who I will be making a statement about later, is here, joined by his mother, Shelly Hofer, and their family friend Sylvia Stark.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park, visiting from Thunder Bay, my son, Dustin Mauro, in the members' east gallery.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Please welcome ambassadors from the MS Society of Canada, who will be here throughout the day meeting with members to talk about the challenges faced by Ontarians with multiple sclerosis.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As the Attorney General, I also want to welcome our friends from LawPRO who are here today and who hosted a breakfast this morning. Please welcome Dan Pinnington and Raymond Leclair to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

It's therefore time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday, the public accounts committee passed a motion to review the GO station the minister approved in his riding. But let's not forget, this isn't the first time the minister has put his own interests ahead of better transit.

Two years ago, Mayor Tory called for the subway to York University to be opened before the rest of the line was finished to Vaughan. Mr. Speaker, did the minister block that project as well because the subway wasn't ready in Vaughan?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the question from the member. I actually find it remarkable that somebody from that caucus, in particular, has the audacity to stand up and ask a question about the construction of a subway in the GTA.

Speaker, I've actually lived here in this region my entire life, and I seem to recall a really dark period for transit investments here in the GTHA. That would be the period in the mid-1990s, when the Conservative Premier of the day, Mike Harris, chose to kill and fill the Eglinton subway. And here we are now, a generation later, trying to make up for that disastrous decision made by a Conservative government and a Conservative leader with respect to transit.

I look forward to the next two questions on this topic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Two and a half years ago, the mayor said that he was open to all options to stop the bleeding of the extension, including a phased opening that would see trains turn around at York University to start. But the minister rejected that plan. He said that Ontario has the expectation that the project would be running all the way to York region.

So here we are, three years later, and the minister appears to be making decisions based solely on his riding. Mr. Speaker, how does the minister defend his history of politically motivated decisions?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Based on my answer to the first question, it shouldn't come as a shock to anybody here in this chamber that a Conservative MPP would be so horribly wrong about transit here in the GTA. That member, if he knew—and his party and his leader, Patrick Brown. If they knew just a little bit about transit projects like the Toronto-York-Spadina subway extension, they would know that it's a project that is being led and managed and built by the Toronto Transit Commission—the TTC, that is, Speaker.

But let me say: The really exciting news—unlike the Conservative Party, Speaker—about subway expansions here in the GTHA is that because of Premier Kathleen Wynne and because of other former Liberal Premiers and other former Liberals from this side of the House, in less than three months, on December 17, the Toronto-York-Spadina subway extension will actually open for service

here. Speaker, this is a very real accomplishment: the single largest transit accomplishment in this region in my entire lifetime, no thanks to members from that party.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Again to the minister: Ethics and accountability are rare on the Liberal benches. The minister shows it time and time again as he puts himself above the transit needs of Ontario. If he hadn't got caught, taxpayers—

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Mr. Steve Clark: If he hadn't got caught, taxpayers would have been on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars. How many more millions of dollars will this minister cost taxpayers for his own personal political benefit?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You know, Speaker, the really funny part is that it's funny to hear that member from Leeds-Grenville ask a question about how many more things, how many more times? Guys, I guess the question I have back is: How many more times will members of the Conservative caucus approach me about making sure we invest in transportation in their riding? I look at every single member on that side of the House—every single one—and I can I think of virtually all of you, over the last three years and a few months since I became the Minister of Transportation, regularly sending me letters, making requests—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case you have to be reminded, I'm standing.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I was saying, it's a shameful example of a completely ridiculous question from the member from Leeds-Grenville when that member and his colleagues and his leader and his transportation critic on a regular basis have applauded decisions that suit them and their narrow political interests and they try to hold me to account.

Speaker, at the end of the day we are building transit and transportation in every corner, including in Conservative ridings, and we're going to keep—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last spring, we heard the minister promise to support my private member's bill to provide guaranteed funding for seniors in long-term care. This was after he was exposed for underfunding them by so much that even prisoners were being fed better than our seniors in long-term care. Imagine the difference in the quality of life and better care this funding guarantee would give our seniors. On their behalf, I ask: When will

the minister enshrine in law a guarantee that spending on seniors in long-term care keeps pace with inflation?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Perhaps the member opposite missed our spring budget, where we increased the food allocation for residents of long-term care by 6.5%. In fact, we increased it at a level that was greater than what the sector themselves had asked for.

1040

We continue to make investments. In fact, that was part of a more than \$80-million new investment this year alone in such issues as not just the quantum towards food in long-term care but also for behavioural supports for seniors in long-term care, as well as for the overall resident needs and for specialized care.

We have more than doubled our investment in long-term care since coming into office. We continue to make those important investments.

I look forward to the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: You only did it because we've shone the light on you and shamed you into it.

Guaranteed funding is about making a difference, taking responsibility and showing competence so that seniors can finally get better care, better oversight and protections—all of which they deserve.

Considering the minister admitted in question period on September 14 that he has abdicated responsibility in protecting seniors from abuse and neglect by not enforcing the law 100%, I want to know: Will he finally agree to act as a genuine guardian of our seniors and protect them by enshrining in law guaranteed funding of long-term care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I obviously don't have the same recollection as the member opposite does. I take my responsibility for seniors in long-term care very, very seriously.

That's why, since taking office, we've built more than 10,000 new long-term-care beds. That's why we've redeveloped more than 13,000—

Mr. Bill Walker: Where? Where?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have the list right in front of me, and I'm happy to talk to the member opposite afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, we've redeveloped more than 13,000. We've committed to redeveloping 30,000 by 2025, so our investments in long-term care are substantial. They are continuing, including the \$80 million that I referenced in the spring budget that that member voted against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the minister: Sunday is National Seniors Day, and there's a lot to celebrate. Stratford, which I represent, was again named one of Canada's best places to retire.

But seniors are worried that they won't get the long-term-care beds they need, and it's no wonder. Investment has dried up, even as the need keeps going up. The gov-

ernment is considering a proposal to transfer up to 50 of our beds out of Perth county and into London, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. More long-term-care homes are going to close when their licences expire.

Will the government stop the bed transfer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite, I believe, knows that it was under my direction that I changed the process when we do receive proposals from the long-term-care sector. This isn't a proposal from the government; this is an operator of a long-term-care home or a number of long-term-care homes. When we receive those proposals, I have directed that there be a substantial community consultation led by the LHIN. We take into account that community consultation after we've received that proposal before we go any further at all.

Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made with regard to any potential transfer. It's simply a proposal that has come to us, without us requesting it. It's a proposal that has come to us making some suggestions in terms of how that redevelopment might occur. But we are in the phase and, importantly, the critical stage of getting that community consultation so we'll understand what the impact on the community might be.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For almost four years the Premier and her health minister have denied that there's a crisis in our hospitals and in our long-term care. She told nurses and health care workers that they were wrong. She told doctors that they were wrong. She told hospital administrators that they were wrong. She told journalists and opposition politicians that they were wrong. She told people lying in hallways or broom closets instead of rooms that they were wrong.

Yesterday, she finally admitted that there is a crisis in our hospitals and our long-term-care system. Will the government now admit that this crisis is of their making, the result of years of budget cuts and freezes and negligence on behalf of the Premier and her government?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I regret the fact that the leader of the third party wasn't here yesterday for her party's two lead questions.

Interjection: You can't say that.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I apologize, Speaker.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: What I find absolutely shocking about the third party is that when this government comes forward with solutions to address the very capacity challenges that that member just referenced, her party opposes them. When that party opposes a proposal that has come from half a dozen hospitals in the GTA, in the Toronto Central LHIN, a proposal to increase their capacity

and alleviate the very pressures—her party has specifically, emphatically opposed that proposal which will relieve the precise thing that we're trying to solve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, I was in Brampton with a woman named Sunanda. She told me about being left in the hallways of Brampton Civic Hospital for two and a half days. She couldn't sleep because it was too loud. She was shuffled around constantly from hallway to hallway, sometimes in the middle of the night. She didn't get any food for the first day and a half that she was in that hospital.

Sunanda's story is tragic and, sadly, not unique in Ontario. The Premier's plan to maybe, one day, open 150 beds in Toronto, with no time frame or guarantee that will actually ever happen, will not help Sunanda and patients like her.

Does this government really think that 150 beds will fix the province-wide crisis that they've created in our hospitals and long-term-care system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Only the NDP would see utilizing resources, increasing capacity and helping patients—only the NDP would see that as a problem. It was emphatically clear yesterday, despite many, many months of the NDP asking this government to increase capacity, when we in fact are entertaining and considering a proposal that comes from the Toronto Central LHIN, that comes from a number of hospitals themselves, which will do precisely what they've been asking for, only the NDP would emphatically and categorically reject that proposal.

I can confidently tell the public and the Legislature that those 150 beds—the proposal that's being put forward to us by a number of hospitals in the GTA and the Toronto Central LHIN would result in those beds being available this calendar year.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's emphatically clear is that 150 beds are not going to address a 30,000-person wait-list in long-term care that is growing each and every month in the province of Ontario.

Brampton Civic Hospital has been overcapacity for more than two years. That's not the NDP saying that, Speaker, or even Bramptonians like Sunanda; in fact, that fact comes from the hospital itself. But it's not just Brampton Civic either. Hospitals in Kitchener, Brant, London and Sudbury are all overcapacity on a daily basis in this province. It is the new normal in Ontario.

The 150 beds are not a real plan. What's the government doing right now to alleviate this entire crisis that stretches from one end of the province to the other?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm glad now that the third party appears to support the proposal coming for the Finch site of the Humber River Hospital.

The fact is, from April through July, William Osler, which includes the Brampton site, had an 86% occupancy, which, in fact, was less than it was last winter. The leader of the third party knows that we've made a \$24-million investment that was referenced in the budget that they voted against earlier this year specifically to increase capacity and to provide specialized transitional support, including rehabilitation and individual support for individuals who are non-acute, who perhaps reside in hospital—perhaps not—to actually get that focused care.

So we've reached out across the province for precisely that. We're not going to do what the NDP did when they were in power. They closed more than 9,000 beds.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. The fact is that this government's last budget shorted the hospital system by \$300 million, which they requested from the government. That's the fact, Speaker.

Hospitals are desperately overcrowded. Patients are being left in hallways for days. People are waiting in emergency rooms for 12 hours or more. The wait-list for long-term care, as I mentioned earlier, is 30,000 people long right now, and we have a government that is maybe offering 150 beds.

1050

The Premier is scrambling to find a Band-Aid after years of making this problem worse. Can the government tell the people of Ontario why they caused this crisis to happen in the first place and refuse to take real, immediate action to help those who are sick in our province?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I absolutely appreciate the change of heart of the leader of the third party and her caucus. Yesterday, the proposal for 150 beds in the Toronto Central LHIN was described by them as moth-balling, as warehousing. I'll give the leader of the third party the opportunity in her supplementary, but I believe they've had a change of heart and they see that this actually will contribute to the capacity challenge that is faced for a number of reasons across this province.

We're working across the province with our LHINs, with our hospitals. We specifically have asked our hospitals to come forward with proposals that they believe will not only improve the quality of care for those in the hospital, for non-acute patients, but provide those focused transitional high-level care opportunities that they deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The NDP is committed to funding hospitals, at a minimum, to the rate of inflation and population growth, and to meet the unique needs of rural, small and northern communities. It is a first step in undoing the damage done by decades of Liberal and Conservative cuts. If the Premier is as concerned as she says that she is about the state of our hospitals, then what I

have to ask is: Will this government commit right now to providing the immediate emergency relief that the Ontario Hospital Association has asked for, and make sure that, at a minimum, the ongoing funding keeps up with inflation, population growth and the unique needs of the communities in our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We provided our hospitals with more than \$500 million in the spring budget and increased our capital investment by \$9 billion, so that we're actually building new—and expanding—hospitals to the tune of \$20 billion over the next decade.

That \$500 million includes improving access and expanding services for cancer treatment, for diagnostic treatment, for emergency services, for wait time reduction. For the north, for the south, for the east and the west of this province, we're making those investments, including those that are specific to addressing the capacity problem that a number of hospitals that I have acknowledged in the past do face, because of a growing population, because of an aging population, because of the need to make sure that we continue to make those investments, the investments that they voted against earlier this year.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the government won't even commit to the keeping up with inflation, one wonders how they expect hospitals and front-line health care workers to provide the care that people need. This is how we got into this mess in the first place.

The last Conservative government fired 6,000 nurses, they closed 28 hospitals, and they slashed over 7,000 hospital beds. And this Liberal government has cut or frozen hospital budgets for years and years on end; a decade of freezes and cuts. One hundred and fifty beds is not a credible plan to fix this entire mess when there are thousands of Ontarians crammed into the hallways of almost every hospital in this province.

Does the Liberal government sincerely believe that if they reopen a few beds in one hospital the crisis that they've created in our province will be solved?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Since they brought up the Conservatives, I need to remind Ontarians about the NDP government when they were in power. They delisted 10% of all the drugs on the formulary. They delisted home care from OHIP. They closed 24% of the acute hospital beds in this province. They closed 13% of the mental health beds in this province, for a total of 9,645 beds. In their last budget, they reduced hospital funding by 1%, and they reduced total health care spending, in their last budget as well, by 1% for the second year in a row.

That's their legacy. They had a minister of cuts that was going to take an additional \$500 million out of health care and education should they have been elected in 2014. That's their record; that's their legacy. They're the last people that I'm going to take advice from.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Acting Premier: Earlier this week, the Leader of the Opposition

had some questions about the impact of the heat wave on our students.

Recently, a local parent reached out to me to voice his concerns. Last Thursday, a student in my riding brought a thermometer to school. The parents were concerned about the heat. At 11:30 a.m., the thermometer read 32 degrees. The following afternoon, it read 34 degrees.

Acting Premier, I know that when your office gets too hot you can move to a more comfortable place for a meeting, but we don't have that luxury for our students. I'm asking you to commit here today that we will have a mandate for maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event of extreme heat.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

We certainly have been experiencing some warm days this late in the season, in September. I'm very happy that today we've had some natural relief; it's much, much cooler today. I'm sure that our classrooms are experiencing that change in the weather.

I understand the concern that the member opposite is bringing forward. Our teachers, our students—of course, when the classrooms are warm, that is impacting their ability to learn in the classroom. That is exactly why we have provided school boards across Ontario with increased investment in renewal funding: \$1.4 billion has been provided to school boards to address their priority concerns, including installing air conditioning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: The Premier has championed this government as a leader in climate change, and you acknowledge that it will trigger extremes.

Why isn't the learning environment of our children a priority? I will ask you one more time: Will you commit here today that we will have a mandate for maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event of extreme heat?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Well, Mr. Speaker, I actually believe that our education system is a priority of this government, and you see that in our record. When the member opposite's party was in power, our education system was actually in a state of chaos. Graduation rates were only 68%. As of last year, they are at 86.5%. Funding for education since 2003 has actually gone up by 66%. We are spending more today on a per pupil basis than we were before.

As it relates specifically to the learning environment, we have prioritized that. I mentioned in my earlier answer the \$1.4 billion in investment. That is in addition to the \$2.7 billion that we have provided to our school boards over the last two years so that we can improve the learning environment for all of our students.

OPIOID ABUSE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Health. Statistics recently released by Public Health Ontario showed that Waterloo region has experienced an increase in opioid fatalities. In 2015, 23 people died from overdoses. This number rose to 38 in 2016. Between January and July of this year, 35 people died of opioid overdoses.

It is clear that there is an increasing strain on public emergency services to respond to opioid-related incidents in Waterloo region and indeed across Ontario.

1100

To address this crisis, Waterloo Regional Police Chief Bryan Larkin ordered \$43,000 worth of naloxone doses. They've asked this government to provide emergency relief funding. Can the government commit today to funding naloxone kits for front-line workers in Waterloo region?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That gives me an opportunity to reiterate a portion of the member opposite's question—that we are facing an unprecedented opioid crisis in this province.

That's why this government has acted early and substantially with almost \$300 million over the next two and a half years that will go specifically and entirely to addressing all of the opportunities to slow and stop this crisis. It includes the LHIN that the member resides in and represents, and the community within, the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, where earlier this year—we provided additional human resources and financial resources to every single public health unit around the province. It includes naloxone, which is available in more than 1,600 pharmacies in 200 communities across this province.

I'm happy to talk more about the investments that we're making in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The police chiefs of Ontario wrote to this government almost nine months ago asking for emergency relief on this very issue. This summer, I had multiple conversations about the opioid crisis with Chief Larkin. In just two months this past summer, naloxone kits were administered six times and saved four lives. The other two times, naloxone was administered to officers who were exposed to fentanyl.

The well-being of officers is compromised when they come into contact with narcotics and require medical attention. Simply put, this is a matter of workplace health and safety for front-line workers. It is a public health crisis. It is time for this province to catch up to this crisis.

I will ask again: Can the government commit today to providing emergency funding for naloxone for front-line services, which is what they deserve?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank the member for her questions. Certainly, when I look at the great work that our police officers are doing every single day to support communities and to support us, I have to commend their great efforts.

I want to say that I do have regular conversations with Chief Larkin and all other police services, including our OPP officers, on the aspect of moving forward to ensure that they are safe in their practice, but also to ensure that they have the right resources to practise and continue the great work they do. I am very open.

We are moving on our strategy for a safer Ontario, and definitely, this is something we are considering.

TAXATION

Mr. Han Dong: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Ontario's vibrant arts and culture organizations are part of what makes this province such a great place to live. A building in my riding, 401 Richmond, is occupied by over 140 artists, culture creators, start-ups, galleries, festivals and shops. Many of the tenants in this building are non-profit charitable organizations.

On Tuesday, I was very happy to announce that 401 Richmond has had their property tax assessment reduced. This reduction is a result of a reassessment of the property valuation by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please share with this House the details about the reduction of the property tax reassessment for 401 Richmond?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I applaud the outstanding advocacy of the member from Trinity–Spadina on this very issue. I am proud and happy to talk about the resolution to the stakeholders of his riding. MPP Dong has worked tirelessly with the owners and tenants of 401 Richmond since February. I thank the member for his leadership.

I cannot underestimate the value that cultural and innovation hubs contribute to our economy, which is why I'm pleased that MPAC and the property owners were able to resolve the assessment appeals for this property through a negotiated settlement, which has reduced the 2016 current value assessment by more than 40%. There will also be a tax refund for the 2013 to 2016 tax years.

I'm proud to work alongside all our colleagues in this House and my caucus members who work so hard to support local arts and art community centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. I'm pleased that MPAC was able to deliver a reduced assessment for this cultural hub, which is so important to me and the people in my riding.

While the reduction provides some time to address the concerns of the tenants, it does not address the future financial uncertainty that they are facing regarding the potential increase in their property taxes. That is why I'm encouraging the city of Toronto to explore a new property tax class for non-profit organizations.

I'm mindful that this will impact the bottom line of the city. That is why I'm happy to hear that the Ministry of Finance is taking a very responsible approach by asking the city to provide a definition of this new class.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he provide details on the next steps of implementing this new property tax class?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Following MPP Dong's engagement on this issue, we have been meeting with the city of Toronto to discuss the tools that the city can use to reduce property taxes for the owner and the tenants of 401 Richmond. These discussions have examined the range of existing tax tools that are at the city's disposal, including tax rebates for charities and heritage properties, and tax exemptions for municipal capital facilities.

We've also explored the possibility of creating, as the member just mentioned, a new property class—property classes could be created through regulation under the Assessment Act.

First and foremost, we would need a formal request from the city of Toronto to create such a class. We've already seen support from local city councillor Joe Cressy, who has recognized our government's co-operation. Once we receive this council resolution, the Ministry of Finance would work with the city to develop a framework that would encompass the eligibility criteria that it desires.

We will continue to support the city and other parties in this effort to ensure that properties like 401 Richmond can continue to operate as important incubators for arts and cultural communities.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, I asked about the safety plan for the Bala Falls hydroelectric generating station on Monday, but your answer was not clear. I will ask again: Has your ministry received a safety plan from Swift River Energy?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much for the question. It's a bit surprising, this question from the member opposite, who has really not been engaged in this process, whereas my ministry has been for some years.

The Ontario government is committed to expanding clean and renewable sources of energy such as water and wind power. There have been many years with many consultations with the community and a lot of work that my ministry and the ministry of energy and climate change have put towards this particular project.

Public safety has been the number one issue in this area. At the moment, Swift River Energy has received approval for pre-construction work, including fencing, storing equipment and materials, and construction of cofferdams. Our ministry has posted signs and fences to ensure public safety. The ongoing safety concerns are heard, but the plans are in place. I'll speak more to the details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Minister, I want to read from the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act Administrative

Guide published by your ministry. It states that one of the purposes of the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act is the "protection of persons and of property by ensuring that dams are suitably located, constructed, operated and maintained...." This is the minister's responsibility.

This power dam is being located in the middle of a popular recreation area with cottages and swimming areas in close proximity, both above and below the dam. The Lifesaving Society issued a report on the dangers of this project two years ago.

Speaker, what is the minister doing to ensure that the Bala Falls power dam will not pose a danger to swimmers and boaters?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, again, for the supplementary. At the moment, public safety measures, including fencing and warning signs, have been put in place around the Bala dam area. It is the responsibility of the proponent, Swift River Energy, to put a safety plan in place. Closer to the end of the project is the time when most of the details will be there.

The project has to be built in order to get some of those measurements in place. At the moment, the interim safety plan is in place. It is being enforced by the proponent, and those safety plans will be in front of my ministry, and others, to ensure that the safety of this site will continue.

1110

I just want to reiterate: It's the proponent's responsibility. At the moment, the interim plan is keeping the public safe, which is my ministry's number one issue.

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Today, Joshua M. Ferguson will be filing a human rights application over the delay in issuing a non-binary birth certificate by this government. In May, I asked the government about Joshua's application to amend the sex designation on their birth certificate. ServiceOntario's birth certificate application should take no more than six weeks, but Joshua's application has been "pending" for over four months.

Will the Liberal government stop dragging its feet and ensure equal rights for trans and non-binary folk, as promised five years ago with Toby's Law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to acknowledge the hard work and advocacy of the member from Parkdale-High Park on this very important issue.

Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, she deserves credit for this.

Speaker, our government is very proud to have taken a lead on this issue. We're very pleased to see other jurisdictions, including the federal government, align with us. Our government, of course, values acceptance, respect and diversity, and ensuring that all Ontarians are treated

ethically, equitably, fairly, including the trans and non-binary community.

Similar to the driver's licence and health card policies we've already implemented, we're developing that gender-neutral option for Ontario birth certificates. As I've said here in the House and outside of the House, we've been moving forward with stakeholder consultations, with a view to implementing a new, non-binary certificate in 2018. We're working very diligently on this, engaging all parts of our government, including the federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, why should it take the government six years to amend a form? This is absolutely ludicrous.

Even the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services agreed, in a letter to Joshua, that they "understand and appreciate the negative consequences experienced by those who do not have identification that is congruent with their gender identity." Yet you've taken no action. In the meantime, others like Newfoundland and Labrador and the Northwest Territories have already started to issue birth certificates with non-binary designations.

Does this government—obviously, this government does—have to get sued in order for action on basic human rights?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I do want to assure this House that this government is taking action. We recently introduced a new policy to help trans and non-binary persons live according to their gender identity. Because birth certificates are the foundation for many other forms of identification, we need to make sure we get this right for the people of Ontario. We're working very closely with the federal government on this, and with the other Canadian jurisdictions, to ensure that anything we do that affects a foundation document, such as a birth certificate, will not have negative impacts on the holders.

The federal government has indicated it will move forward to offer the removal of sex designation for passports. For the time being, the federal government said they are implementing interim measures.

Now Ontario will continue to work on developing a system for the issue of non-binary birth certificates. My commitment is unwavering to seeing this through for the new year.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is to the Minister of the Status of Women. The minister was recently asked a question in question period about the anti-human trafficking conferences that took place in Barrie. More than 200 law enforcement workers, social service

workers and court service workers came together to break through the chain of human trafficking. In this meeting, our law enforcement partners discussed how they could effectively address the terrible reality of human trafficking. In collaboration with them, we are working hard to address and eliminate this terrible crime.

I would like to say that I am very proud of the law enforcement officers like the ones in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, where specialized and trained units use a whole-team approach to address and prioritize human trafficking cases. Human trafficking is a crime that violates every human right and continues to affect the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update us on the conference that took place and what the government is doing to end human trafficking in Ontario?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for her hard work on this issue and for this important question.

Absolutely, Speaker, human trafficking is a heart-wrenching crime, and I want you to know we are working tirelessly to help survivors heal and to bring traffickers to justice. It's conferences like the ones in Barrie and Kenora that have allowed us to move quickly to address human trafficking. I'm pleased that through our government's Civil Remedies Grant, the OPP were able to hold conferences and find ways for law enforcement to address human trafficking.

Our government takes this issue seriously. That's why we launched Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking and have invested close to \$72 million, including funding for 47 community-based initiatives. We are also pleased that we've passed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. We've consulted with more than 200 organizations as part of our Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports Fund. Applicants will soon know about the funding available, and we've created a new Human Trafficking Lived Experience Roundtable.

There's more work to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I want to thank the minister for her answer. As I said earlier, police services across the province are working hard at finding the most effective ways of fighting this heinous crime.

Last week, my riding of Kingston and the Islands was mentioned in this discussion, and I would suggest that there were some errors mentioned in the House regarding what officers in my riding are doing to end human trafficking. I'm proud to report that the Kingston Police take a collaborative, team approach to battle human trafficking, and that it does not fall on the shoulders of one unit or, say, a couple of members of its highly capable team. With a population of 116,000 in its city core, Kingstonians can rest assured that our police department will continue to take a team approach and that they will continue to keep human trafficking a high priority.

I would like to thank all those who are helping to fight human trafficking. Can the minister please speak to how

our government is working with police services across this province to put an end to human—

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

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for the question. We know that a big part of putting an end to human trafficking is ensuring that police have the necessary tools and training. Through our policing grant programs, we help police services get the resources they need to stop this unacceptable crime.

Just a few months ago the London Police Service, alongside police services from Strathroy-Caradoc, Stratford and Woodstock, made 78 arrests and helped 18 survivors after a six-month investigation. Since April, the OPP have also laid 22 human trafficking charges and an additional 92 Criminal Code offences.

Starting this fall, the OPP will lead an Anti-Human Trafficking Investigations Coordination Team to aid municipal and First Nations police services in their investigation. We will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to end—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, my private member's bill, the Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, passed second reading with tri-partisan support. It's a straightforward piece of legislation that would allow natural gas customers to see the cost of cap-and-trade on their bill, giving Ontario ratepayers the same level of transparency already enjoyed by those in Quebec and British Columbia.

Support for this common-sense bill is widespread. The Auditor General's survey of ratepayers revealed 89% thought it important to disclose the impact of cap-and-trade on natural gas bills.

Speaker, does the minister agree with 89% of natural gas users, and does he think people deserve to know exactly how much they're paying for the Liberals' cap-and-trade program?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and provide comment to the question in relation to cap-and-trade on energy bills. The cost of that was a decision that was made by the Ontario Energy Board. That's a quasi-judicial, independent organization from the government. They did their due diligence. They went through the process. They spoke with people; they did consultations around the province. They even allowed for written submissions to this subject matter. Then, after they made their decision, they realized that their decision was that this was a cost of doing business. Like has been done in many other instances and in many other sectors, their decision was independent of this government, and they

made the decision to put that as a part of the cost of doing business.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: When people get a bill they expect and deserve to see every tax they pay. Cap-and-trade cannot be credible or fair if its cost is hidden in the delivery charge. This Liberal government has spent millions of dollars advertising their hydro plan because they claim it's critical that people understand their hydro bills. But they refuse to support this legislation, which wouldn't cost taxpayers a dime, to give natural gas users basic transparency.

Will the minister step up and give the people of Ontario the accountability they deserve and the transparency that they were promised by this Liberal government?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When we're talking about transparency, it's this government that brings it forward, Mr. Speaker. The only time we're talking about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order. And the member from Leeds-Grenville.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The only thing that's hidden is that party's plan on anything to do with energy. We keep waiting. We heard 200 days ago that there would be a plan on electricity. We keep hearing about plans that they would do something. Actually, that party does absolutely nothing when it comes to electricity except to complain about it. When it comes to cap-and-trade dollars, we're making sure that we're investing in this. We've shut down coal plants. It's like taking seven million cars off of the road and saving \$4 billion in our health care system. We are proud of what we've done to ensure that we're doing our part to address climate change and making life more affordable for Ontarians.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is for the Deputy Premier. We just learned that the scandal-plagued Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority gutted its watershed management department in half, firing many key front-line staff. The NPCA is mandated to protect Niagara and parts of Hamilton's environment for nearly a million residents. Instead, it has been very busy firing environmental specialists and suing private citizens who dare to speak up for accountability.

Despite receiving government funding and despite my community's pleas for this government to do something, they continue to let the people of Niagara down by doing nothing. When will this government stop the waste of public tax dollars, ensure that accountability and transparency are brought to the NPCA, and restore our community's trust in our conservation authority?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the member for her question. As I've said before, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has no authority to intervene in the operations of any given conservation authority. The member from Welland knows this; we've had several conversations regarding my authority as a minister. Each conservation authority is governed by a board of directors whose members are appointed by participating municipalities. These municipal representatives decide on the programs and policies of the authority, including policies related to staffing. Oversight of day-to-day operations and human resource management is typically delegated to a general manager or chief administrative officer who is, again, chosen by municipal representatives.

I can assure the House that I've had multiple conversations with the member from St. Catharines, as well as Welland, on this issue and regarding their concerns.

Speaker, this issue highlights the importance of modernizing the Conservation Authorities Act. I was pleased to see support from both opposition members on this important act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, we need to amend the bill that is going to committee to add the addition of appointing a supervisor.

This isn't the first time that I've listed the issues plaguing this authority. This year alone, we've seen the NPCA fire many key staff, censure board members with dissenting viewpoints, lobby the government to allow developers to build on significantly protected wetlands, stall the Auditor General's offer to audit the books, stall freedom-of-information requests, allow widespread workplace harassment—and the list goes on.

When will this government step in, one of its ministries, and hold the NPCA board accountable, ensure public dollars are well spent and that necessary transparency, integrity and accountability are brought back to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Through our proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, we're aiming to strengthen oversight and accountability to ensure that decisions about Ontario's natural resources are made in accordance with modern expectations for transparency.

Oversight of conservation authority operations is a responsibility of the board. However, there are situations where a ministry review is necessary, so we're proposing to enhance the ministry's authority in these situations by enabling the minister to require a conservation authority to disclose or publish information on programs, services or operations. This would help to shed light on perceived issues with conservation authority decisions.

This is just one example of the many proposed improvements we're making to the Conservation Authorities Act. Yesterday, all three parties voted to support the changes, and I'm happy to see that the parties opposite take these seriously and hope to see their support for Bill 139. I understand they have no plan. We do, and I'm happy they're supporting ours.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Clearly, the members of the opposition—in particular, the leader of the third party—haven't fully embraced the extensive magnitude of investments we're making in health care in the province of Ontario. I know that health care is a top priority for our government, but it's astounding to hear questions about adding new beds in long-term care—to somehow be classified as a negative.

Investing in health infrastructure is an important part of ensuring Ontario patients have access to high-quality care that is needed today and well into the future. In my riding of Beaches–East York, we are most appreciative of the government's new investments to the Michael Garron Hospital, our local hospital. Last year, the hospital received more than \$2.8 million through Ontario's Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund and over \$3.8 million additional dollars in the budget.

Will the Minister of Health please update this House on the important investments that Ontario is making in hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. Of the additional \$1 billion that we are investing in health care this fiscal year, half of that investment goes to hospitals—half a billion dollars—including for them to be able to address challenges that they face, but also, specifically, we're making multi-year investments to reduce wait times as well. We committed, in this year's budget, to \$1.3 billion solely and explicitly in the government investment for hospitals, as well as in mental health facilities, to reduce wait times for key health services.

In addition, over the next three years we'll be increasing the health budget by an additional \$7 billion. That investment that we announced earlier this year represents a 3.1% increase just to the hospital sector. We will continue to make the investments that are required to ensure that that highest quality of care is being provided.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for that response and the incredible work that he is doing to ensure that we have excellent health care in the province of Ontario, because it is reassuring to know that our government is committed to ensuring quality care across Ontario and particularly in my own area of Beaches–East York. I know that these investments will have a tremendous impact on the people of Ontario because it will reduce wait times, provide access to care and enhance the patient experience.

In Beaches–East York, Speaker, you might be aware, we have three RFPs now accepted going forward to be evaluated for a massive new infrastructure renewal project at Michael Garron, which is likely to cost hundreds of millions of dollars of investment, to provide the excellent quality care that we need and deserve in Beaches–East York.

Would the minister provide further details on how these investments, operational and capital, will benefit the hospitals across Ontario and all the people of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In addition to the fact that over the last several years we've added more than 1,000 hospital beds to this province's capacity, in this year's budget we specifically targeted priority services: almost \$200 million for cardiac services, critical care, organ and tissue donations and transplantations, rare diseases, bariatric services, and also supporting new and re-developed hospitals. We are contributing \$91 million in targeted investments to reduce wait times for specific procedures: hip and knee replacements, stroke therapy, chemotherapy and MRI; \$30 million in high-growth communities; \$10 million in new funding for medium-sized hospitals; \$15 million in new funding for small, northern and rural hospitals; \$13 million of new funding for specialty mental health hospitals; and \$12 million earmarked for pediatric hospitals, to support the continued provision of high-quality patient care.

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HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. They call it Carnage Alley. The stretch of the 401 between London and Tilbury is one of the most dangerous roads in Ontario.

On August 29, a pickup truck crossed the centre median of the 401 near Dutton and smashed into a van head-on. The two people in the van, a mother and her five-year-old daughter, were killed. Sadly, there was another tragedy on July 31, where two people were killed and two more seriously injured in a collision involving a tractor-trailer and six cars. A median barrier would do a lot to prevent needless deaths and accidents like these.

In 2009, the Ministry of Transportation received environmental clearance to expand Carnage Alley to six lanes and to install a median barrier; however, the MTO claimed it wasn't worthwhile to make Carnage Alley safer because of a lack of traffic on that stretch of the 401. The government's position is appalling. We're talking about one of the busiest highways and border crossings in the country.

Minister, if you won't expand the 401 to six lanes, will you at least pave the grass median and build a barrier?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for his question. I have said on a number of occasions here in this chamber and elsewhere that road and highway safety is the top priority of the Ministry of Transportation. When I hear any kind of message that's conveyed regarding an injury or a fatality on any stretch of road or highway in the province, of course, my heart goes out to the family and friends of those who are involved, and, in the case of an injury, to the person who was involved themselves.

I am aware of some of the challenges that exist with respect to the stretch of the 401 that the member opposite is talking about. Whether we're talking about that par-

ticular piece of the 401 or most of the highway network right across the province of Ontario, we are currently involved in many upgrades and many rehabilitations. We are literally investing not just hundreds of millions of dollars but billions of dollars in every corner, including in the southwest on Highway 401 and others.

I know that there's a very specific request that this member has made, and I'll get to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Next Wednesday, Minister, close to 100 people from my riding of Chatham-Kent will be coming to Queen's Park. They'll be here to protest the extreme danger of Carnage Alley. They're all friends and family of the two latest victims, who lost their lives in that head-on collision. They want to talk to me about the recent tragedy and explain the necessity of a median barrier.

My question to you, Minister, is very simple: Will you make yourself available to talk with them also?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: A couple of things I'll point out first, as I mentioned I would say in the supplementary, and the member would probably know this: Since 2015, the ministry has been reconstructing sections of Highway 401 through Chatham-Kent under several separate contracts. There is definitely more work that is both needed and is to come, including the installation of barriers in the grass median.

In an upcoming project, for example, the ministry will be reconstructing the eastbound lanes of the 401 from east of Drake Road to east of Charing Cross Road, and from west of Mull Road to west of Victoria Road. That work will also include installing high-tension cable barriers within the 15-metre-wide grass median, from the beginning of the four-lane section of Highway 401 in Tilbury easterly to the Victoria Road interchange in Chatham-Kent, for a total length of 50 kilometres. I point this out to say that there is ongoing work that's taking place, Speaker.

With respect to the last part of the member's question, when the individuals from his community are here next week, assuming that I'm available, I'd be happy to meet with them.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. For the past two weeks, classrooms in my community have been sweltering. Teachers were taking photos of classroom thermometers. Some classrooms endured temperatures as high as 42 degrees, they reported this week. With temperatures like that, students' health is at risk, and their ability to learn is compromised, Speaker.

Thankfully, today our students are finally seeing some relief, but temperatures are expected to rise again next week.

Some community councils were able to spend fund-raised money on electric fans for the classroom this

week. Schools in economically challenged areas, like the school I taught at in the south end of Oshawa, don't have community councils with extra money to spend on fans.

I would like to know: Does the Premier think that parents should have to fundraise to make sure that their kids can learn in safe and healthy environments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for her question.

The answer is no. We are providing funding to our school boards so that they can prioritize the needs in their schools. As I've said in this House, \$1.4 billion has been provided to school boards to prioritize the capital renewal needs in their local communities.

I do want to say that there are school boards, for instance, that are prioritizing adding cooling areas into schools. They are adding air conditioning into areas like the gym or the library that can serve as those cooling areas.

I believe that our locally elected school boards, as well as the directors of education, really do understand the needs in their communities, as well as the school leaders, the principals, the vice-principals and the teacher educators. We want to give them the flexibility to make those decisions.

VISITOR

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, I'd like to welcome in the gallery Zach Hofer. You may have heard of him from Zach Makes Tracks. This young hero ran from Barrie to Ottawa. All the way along the route, he was raising awareness and funds for youth mental health.

Welcome to Zach and his family.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to correct my record. I reported in my question that there were 35 opioid overdose fatalities in Waterloo region. Actually, there have been 42 since August 22.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke North on a point of order.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd invite all members of the Legislature to please welcome a member of the national assembly of Bangladesh: Mahjabeen Khaled, elected in 2014, also a member of the standing committee on Foreign Affairs; accompanied by Javaid Ali Khan, a local community leader. Welcome.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct my record. On Tuesday, I mistakenly said that Ontario Racing was in attendance for our meeting with the member from Niagara Falls. I'd like to correct this error: It was Woodbine that joined us in that meeting and not Ontario Racing.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning emergency funding for naloxone kits to the Waterloo Regional Police Service. The matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

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

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIDEO GAME

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I notice that I stole 10 seconds, so I'm waiting 10 seconds for the member to settle in. Therefore, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: We're all proud Ontarians because we live in the best country in the world. Most of the world wants to be here because of our inclusiveness and ability to live harmoniously together.

But, Mr. Speaker, I came across an alarming video game concept that is being promoted in Ontario. It's a game idea that defies our values. It's called Dirty Chinese Restaurant.

Based on the game trailer, the game would use every negative, demeaning stereotype of the Chinese community imaginable. The object of the game is for the player to use every means possible to cut costs in the restaurant by feeding cats and dogs as meat, garbage as vegetables, evading taxes and employing non-residents.

The company, whose motto is "Because Being Politically Correct Is So ... Boring," is based in Markham, Ontario.

I urge Google and Apple not to distribute this Dirty Chinese Restaurant app. As Ontario PCs, we have already declared this game idea as derogatory, tasteless and racist. We have an Anti-Racism Directorate for a reason in Ontario: to condemn and put a stop to these racist endeavours.

PENSION PLANS

Miss Monique Taylor: Recently my federal counterpart, Scott Duvall, the member of Parliament for Hamil-

ton Mountain, announced that he would be introducing a private member's bill in Ottawa to ensure pensions are protected when companies file for bankruptcy protection.

Companies have been using the CCAA to deprive workers and pensioners of what they were promised throughout their working lives. We saw it at Nortel. We saw it at US Steel. We are seeing it now at Sears.

Workers agreed to lower wage increases so that some of that money could be put into pension plans to provide stability and a measure of comfort when they retired. Then they had the rug pulled out from under them. Despite their decades of service, workers found themselves at the end of the line and have to watch as shareholders, banks and creditors all get taken care of ahead of them. That's an absolute disgrace.

Today I want to remind all members of this House of a motion that was discussed in this chamber last year. The motion from the member for Oshawa directed the Legislative Assembly to call on the government of Canada to do exactly what will be brought forward in the House of Commons by Scott Duvall.

That motion was passed by the members of this assembly, and I beg the members to act now. Please, contact your federal counterparts and tell them that Ontario needs them to support this private member's bill.

COLUMBUS CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: Before I start my statement, I want to support my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River on that condemnation of that racist ad. I couldn't agree with him more.

I just want to talk about an incredible event we had in Eglinton—Lawrence last night. We had over 400 people show up, showing support for the cultural centre of the Italian Canadian community and the greater community, the Columbus Centre. We had the local soccer club, we had the North York football club, we had seniors, we had doctors, lawyers, working people of all sorts who came out and said, "Do not destroy the Columbus Centre," which houses the Carrier art gallery, the Alberto Di Giovanni Library, the rotunda, the beautiful grounds.

We totally agree with the North York Community Council, who rejected the application to demolish and build the new joint-use facility proposed by the Catholic school board and Villa Charities Inc., who are trying to redevelop this place.

I want to thank Ernie and Sharon Lustig for helping to organize it; Ian Macdonald from CASA; Murray Rich; Vera Held; Mayor John Tory, who showed up and showed his concern about this proposal to demolish the Columbus Centre—and we want to thank the mayor for showing up—and Maria Coccia.

Odoardo Di Santo, an old-time NDPer, was right by my side, saying, "Do not touch the Columbus Centre."

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Last week, I brought before this House the sad case of Kilean Lodge in Grimsby, where

an estimated 50 beds are likely to be moved out of the Niagara region and into Hamilton, out of an area of the province where wait times are already nearing four years.

Over the weekend, I attended a peaceful protest by staff from CLAC Local 302 at Kilean's neighbouring retirement home, Maplecrest Village. They are protesting deep staffing cuts by Revera homes to Maplecrest Village as well as to Garrison Place in Fort Erie. Many of the front-line staff at these homes will see a drastic reduction in their work hours. Some will be reduced from full-time to part-time status, resulting in a loss of health benefits. Maplecrest is losing 138 service hours bi-weekly, and health care workers and residents are paying the price. Staff report that residents at these homes rely on the care provided to ensure they receive the right medicine at the right time. Residents often forget their medical restrictions involving food, and also need assistance with the basic activities of daily living.

This Liberal government has abdicated its responsibility to properly fund long-term care, leaving hundreds of thousands of seniors to go without the care they need and deserve. The people of Ontario, and particularly our seniors, are suffering from the policies of this government. Whether it's due to the increased costs of doing business in our province or waste and mismanagement in the health care system, 14 years of Liberal mismanagement in this government is making life harder every day for those in need of care.

LIVELY DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOL

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was an honour and a privilege for me to attend a tree-planting ceremony at Lively District Secondary School in my riding of Nickel Belt. It was a wonderful way to celebrate Charlie Tuttle. Charlie was a long-standing principal at Lively high. I want to thank Mrs. Tuttle, her three daughters as well as their families for attending the ceremony. It was also a time to celebrate Canada 150, the 60th anniversary of Lively high school—yes, it opened in 1957—and the Walden community as a whole.

The tree-planting was made possible thanks to the generosity of Walden Home Hardware, Tree Canada, the tree nursery in McKerrow and many sponsors, including Battistelli's Your Independent Grocer, who supplied enough cake to feed the 400 attendees.

But do you know what, Speaker? Behind this truly fun and proud celebration, we all knew that we were also celebrating another victory: the victory of students, families, education workers and the whole community, who managed to keep Lively high school open. Last year at this time, the future of Lively high looked pretty grim. Like so many schools outside of the downtown core, Lively high was slated for closure. But we won; we kept it open.

Lively District Secondary School is part of our community, and it allows us to be a community. Long live Lively high. May the Hawks fly proudly.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CLARINGTON

Mr. Granville Anderson: Yesterday, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarington celebrated 40 years of service, and I was very proud to be part of their celebration.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarington was founded by Lionel Parker and Jack Munday in 1977 and has been creating long-lasting, meaningful friendships ever since. This agency has been providing terrific services to the Clarington community for 40 years, leaving a lasting and positive impact on the lives of so many individuals.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarington continues to expand and develop its programs to serve the ever-growing and changing communities in need of its services. Events such as their Big 3-on-3 Road Hockey Tournament and Harvest Tea Party, as well as Bowl for Kids' Sake, continuously bring our community together while creating awareness and fundraising opportunities for the agency. Last year alone, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarington was able to provide support for over 500 children and youth.

In closing, I'd like to thank the agency and all the volunteers for the valuable work they do, and congratulate them on this important milestone.

JASON SCORCIA

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon and commend a fabulous role model for the town of Caledon. This year, the region of Peel hosted the Special Olympics Ontario Summer Games. The Caledon Country Club held the golf competitions where Caledon's own Jason Scorcio was competing. I was able to visit Jason at the Caledon golf club during the golf competition, and I was part of his cheering section as he went on to win the gold medal.

Jason is a tireless ambassador for the Special Olympics. Through his fundraising efforts he was able to sponsor three athletes to participate in this summer's games.

He also operates his charity, Jason's Quest, which raises money for motionball and the Special Olympics. Jason has also published a book, called Jason's Quest, to help raise funds. Jason's hard work and community spirit are the true embodiment of the Special Olympics athletes' oath: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

I hope everyone has the opportunity to learn more about the great work being done at Special Olympics Ontario. It is a wonderful opportunity to have fun, develop skills and build self-esteem.

I congratulate all of the athletes, families and volunteers on the successful Summer Special Olympics, and wish them all the best as they prepare for the 2019 Winter Games in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a board member at the provincial level, I couldn't agree with you more. Thank you.

Further members' statements?

ZACH MAKES TRACKS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I have spoken before in this House about how bringing youth mental health services to my riding of Barrie has been one of my earliest priorities. Today, I would like to recognize a constituent who has worked extremely hard to support this project.

Three years ago, Zach Hofer began planning for what would become a run and bike-ride journey from Barrie to Ottawa to raise funds for youth mental health, inspired in part by Terry Fox. Initially planning on raising \$10,000 for the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, the Zach Makes Tracks campaign had already raised five times as much by the time he left Barrie on August 13.

With support from his mother, Shelley, stepfather, Derek, grandparents Doug and Barb Roberts, and their family friend Sylvia Stark, Zach completed the 410-kilometre journey on September 10, World Suicide Prevention Day. As of now, they have already raised \$80,000 and had the chance to meet with the Prime Minister and the Governor General. Raising this amount for charity is impressive for anyone, but it is remarkable when you consider that Zach is only 13 years old.

Next month, Zach will be among 40 volunteers receiving an award for their contributions to community life in Barrie.

On behalf of this House, I would like to congratulate Zach on this amazing accomplishment and thank Zach and his family for their hard work in supporting our local hospital and raising awareness about youth mental health. What an outstanding young man Zach is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Show off. Atta boy, Zach.

Members' statements?

JAMES POTVIN

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise to commend nine-year-old James Potvin from Whitby, who recently made a difference for thousands of other children with autism spectrum disorder. James is among the 3,000 children on a waiting list to attend Grandview Children's Centre.

The children's centre began operations in the 1980s and was designed to serve approximately 400 children and youth with special needs. Over time, the demand for services throughout the region of Durham increased, and Grandview has faced challenges in meeting these demands.

In late August, James decided to help by riding his bike to Ottawa to raise funds for the children's centre. By the time James finished his ride to Ottawa with his father, he had raised over \$10,000 in donations. These funds will go towards Grandview's operating costs and help thousands of children get off the waiting list and into the many outstanding programs and services provided by Grandview.

Communities, as they should, came out to support James's ride as he approached Ottawa: support that means the world to a nine-year-old boy; support that means the world to the other 3,000 children on the waiting list. James made a difference.

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

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to do a petition on Highway 559.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas provincial Highway 559 is the main artery for the majority of the township of Carling and the only access to the extremely popular Killbear Provincial Park, which had more than 315,000 visitors in 2016; and

"Whereas the decision to downgrade Highway 559 from asphalt to a tar and chip treatment has greatly increased long-standing concerns regarding safety; and

"Whereas traffic includes many large vehicles such as RVs, trailers and heavy maintenance vehicles with which cyclists and pedestrians are currently forced to share the highway due to lack of safer options; and

"Whereas in its current state provincial Highway 559 has many dangerous sightlines and has been plagued by long-standing maintenance issues, including but not limited to improper application of surface treatments;

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

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario request the Ministry of Transportation redesign provincial Highway 559 with safe sightlines and rebuild it with an asphalt surface and bike lanes."

I completely support this petition and give it to Nicola.

WATER FLUORIDATION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair this afternoon.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly given to me by Dr. Lesli Hapak, a periodontist in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. It calls on us to update the Ontario fluoridation legislation.

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of 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 amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

I'll sign it and I will give this to Cole to bring up to the front.

DENTAL CARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Madam Speaker, I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Alessandro.

HYDRO RATES

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the 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; and

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade” has driven “the cost of electricity even higher and” denies “Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

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

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this 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;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario 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.”

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

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Paula Kingsbury from Naughton, in my riding, for this petition. It reads as follows:

“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;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“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 Duncan to bring it to the Clerk.

DENTAL CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s good to see you in the chair on a Thursday afternoon.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have affixed my signature, and I send it to the desk with Emerson.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas patients and family members seeking residential treatment facilities are often faced with long waiting lists for treatment and residential beds; and

“Whereas patients and their families need an open and transparent process to be able to quickly find appropriate and effective treatment options when a loved one is seeking help;

“Whereas there is no central location that lists the over 180 agencies who provide residential substance treatments operating across Ontario; and

“Whereas patients and their families seeking treatment options need a database that includes where a facility is located, what services are offered and whether a treatment centre is accredited; and

“Whereas a searchable database will give patients and their families a resource that will allow for choice and confidence in placing their loved one into treatment;

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

“To adopt Sylvia Jones MPP’s private member’s bill, Bill 99, the protecting patients seeking addiction treatment act, 2017.”

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Greg to take to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have petition from Lynn Kainz in my area.

“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 agree. I’ll affix my name and give this to Milind to bring up to the desk.

BRUCE POWER

Mr. John Fraser: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bruce Power provides 30% of Ontario’s electricity production at 30% below the average cost to generate residential power;

“Whereas extending the operational life of the Bruce Power energy units will ensure families and businesses have long-term, low-cost stability and clean air to breathe;

“Whereas the Life-Extension Program (LEP) will secure an estimated 22,000 jobs and an additional 3,000 to 5,000 jobs annually throughout the investment program, injecting billions into Ontario’s economy;

“Whereas BWXT contributes approximately 1,000 high-skilled, high-paying jobs to residents of Cambridge,

Peterborough, Toronto, Arnprior and Dundas and their surrounding areas;

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“Whereas BWXT generates over \$90 million in payroll and procures over \$100 million in Ontario goods and services annually across its five major operating locations in Ontario;

“Whereas BWXT contributes back over \$50,000 annually to worthy charitable organizations and celebrates a strong engineering co-op program to support the mentorship and development of local engineering students;

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

“To support the vital role that nuclear power plays in delivering clean, affordable electricity while contributing to a prosperous, well-employed regional economy and across the province.”

I agree with the petition. I’m going to sign it and give it to page Javan.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

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

“Whereas since 2006 the Auditor General of Ontario had been responsible for reviewing all government advertising to ensure it was not partisan; and

“Whereas in 2015 the Wynne government watered down the legislation, removing the ability of the Auditor General to reject partisan ads; and

“Whereas the Wynne government has since run ads such as those for the Ontario Pension Plan that were extremely partisan in nature, which cost almost \$800,000; and

“Whereas the Wynne government is currently using taxpayers’ money to run partisan hydro ads; and

“Whereas history shows that the Wynne Liberal government has increased government ad spending in the year prior to a general election;

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

“To immediately restore the Auditor General’s authority to review all government advertising for partisan messages before the ads run.”

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE ET SEXUELLE

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to domestic and sexual violence / *Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la violence familiale et sexuelle.*

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 157, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Protection Act.

In Ontario today, far too many women experience domestic violence or sexual violence. I want to start by acknowledging the tireless work of people across the province to change that fact, and thanking them. There are women and survivors and people in all of our communities who do not get nearly enough recognition but who have devoted their lives to ending domestic and sexual violence—people like Harmy Mendoza, executive director of WomanACT, the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, an organization that does incredibly important work in this city; and people like Dawnmarie Harriott, a survivor and advocate who has tremendous courage and spoke out about her story this morning at our press conference. When Dawnmarie fled her abuser, she fell into poverty, and she struggled, like so many women do, to get their lives back. Now Dawnmarie has devoted herself to tackling huge systemic barriers, educating the public and creating the policy changes that we need to keep women and survivors safe across this province.

The press conference that we held this morning was very moving. It was a very important opportunity to invite these women, who either have lived experience, as Dawnmarie has, or, in Harmy's case, are women who are working all the time to protect women and get them the help they need.

I also want to take a moment to especially thank my colleague MPP Peggy Sattler from the riding of London West. Peggy is our women's critic here in the NDP caucus. She has been working diligently, tirelessly on the women's issues file on behalf of the NDP here in this province. She has an incredibly strong will to advocate on behalf of women. She has been a fantastic advocate for improving the protections that survivors need in this province. Thank you, Peggy, for that important work.

Countless women right now are trapped in an abusive relationship but feel that there's no way out. Countless women right now are feeling that they have no options and no way to leave an unsafe home. Countless women have questions like these running through their minds as they try to leave, or consider leaving, a violent partner: Where will I live and be safe? Where will I find help? How can I protect my children? And will my employer give me the time I need to get myself and my kids into a safer place?

I ask my colleagues to take a moment and just imagine what it's like to know that you must leave in order to protect yourself but to feel that there's no support and no

protection out there. For too long in this province, survivors have been left to feel and face these realities alone, without the basic protections that people need.

Today, when women need to take time off work to find a safe place to live or to seek medical care or to go to court, they risk losing their paycheques or losing their jobs altogether. All too often, that lack of protection forces women to stay in dangerous situations.

Ask any mother. If leaving your abuser means that you'll lose your job and be unable to feed your kids, there's a pretty good chance that you'll continue to put your own safety at risk just to keep food on the table.

No woman, no survivor in Ontario should have to choose between their safety and their ability to pay the bills and take care of their kids.

New Democrats have been working hard to change this reality in our province and to extend the crucial protections that women and survivors of domestic and sexual violence absolutely need.

MPP Sattler introduced a bill a couple of times now—it's currently numbered Bill 26; this is the second time it has been through the Legislature—which extends paid leave to survivors. Both times, as is currently the case right now, this bill has been stuck in the committee process. It passes second reading here in this very type of forum—it has passed this kind of forum twice—but instead of bringing it to the forefront and getting it dealt with through the committee process, the government has not allowed it to move forward.

So this summer, in order to try to address this horrific problem, we brought forward amendments to the government's Bill 148, the Changing Workplaces Review legislation, to try to get that process to recognize that change has to happen, and to expand paid leave to survivors. But inexplicably, once again, the Wynne government defeated these crucial protections, they defeated the amendments that the NDP brought forward, and denied women in this province the right to paid leave.

This kind of inaction means that survivors are still being left all alone, without the options and without the protections that they need to get out of violent relationships. Speaker, that's just not right.

Women across this province cannot wait any longer for this government to find the courage to act. We can do so much better. It's time to act, it's time to make a difference for those women, and it starts by passing this bill and actually passing it into law.

I'm honoured to bring forward the Domestic and Sexual Violence Protection Act to extend 10 days of paid leave to workers who experience domestic or sexual violence. It's time to protect survivors. Il est temps de protéger les survivants.

Extending 10 days of paid leave as well as up to 15 weeks of unpaid leave will finally give people the protection that they need to get out of an unsafe home and get their lives back.

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The way that this bill is structured would end up having the provincial government covering the cost of

extending these 10 days of paid leave for survivors. We thought about this very carefully, and we believe, as New Democrats, that the necessity of providing that support is something that is the responsibility of all of us—not simply the employer, but all of us as a society. It's everyone's job to give survivors the support and protection that they need.

Here's what this bill will mean in the lives of survivors if we can actually get it passed into law. It means that women can take time off work to seek medical attention, including mental health supports and counselling, without the fear of losing their paycheque or losing their job. It means survivors can take the time to find a safe place to live for themselves and for their kids at a very stressful and difficult time, without losing their income and their ability to actually pay the rent once they find a place.

It means that victims can take time away from their workplace, which may be the one place where their abuser knows that they'll be. Women need to be able to take time away from that site. In fact, this is exactly what was discussed at our press conference this morning. The woman who shared her lived experience spoke very clearly about the fact that her abuser would show up at her work and force her to leave work. She knew what was coming every time that happened. After she quit her job, because she had to find safety, she was told that in fact he continued to visit her workplace to try to track her down.

That's why this 15 weeks of unpaid leave is so important, because it gives those survivors time to take away from their workplace and discourage their abuser from showing up there. It means that victims can take time to go to court without having their paycheque docked, and it means that no one in this province will have to pay the price just for looking out for their own safety and the safety of their children. This bill removes one of the reasons that women feel trapped in violent and abusive relationships. It's one piece of the support that survivors need. It's one crucial, practical step that this Legislature can take, after so much delay, to help women and survivors across the province. It will help break the cycle of violence and make Ontario a safer place for all of us.

This morning, Harny Mendoza from the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto reminded us of some of the victims right here in Ontario and across the country who have lost their lives because of domestic violence. I just want to take a moment to remember them in this Legislature. They've been spoken of here many times, and it's shameful that we haven't done enough to prevent the next victims from having that same fate:

—Theresa Vince, who was murdered at her workplace in Chatham;

—Lori Dupont, murdered at the hospital where she worked;

—Ravinder Kaur Bhangu, who was just 23 years old when she was killed at the office where she worked; and

—Camille Runke, who was murdered near her workplace.

These women, and so many other victims, should have been better protected. They should have had the options,

the protections and the support to know that they could leave the violence and rebuild their lives in safety. I want every woman in the province to know, from now on, that she is not trapped and that she will be protected. She will be able to take time off work. She will be able to come back to her job. She will be able to find a safe place to live, make sure her kids are safe and get their lives back.

The way to make that happen is a very simple path, and that is to pass Bill 157 and not just refer it to committee and let it sit there but actually change the laws in this province to protect survivors. Progressive jurisdictions around the world are already doing this. Manitoba has done this. It's in place in Australia, and has been for some time.

This is what needs to happen here in Ontario. Women have waited long enough. By passing this bill, we can make sure that no woman has to choose between her job and her safety. In Ontario, we can protect them both—the jobs and the safety—so let's do it.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm pleased to join the discussion this afternoon on the very serious issue of domestic and sexual violence.

You may recall that back in 2015 our Premier called a select committee on the issue of sexual violence and harassment, and I had the honour and the privilege of chairing that committee. We met over the course of nine months. We travelled to a number of communities—I believe it was about nine or 10. We heard from 147 witnesses during that time and we received many, many written submissions. All of that informed us of how serious this issue is and how we needed to move forward in addressing concerns.

Everyone has the right to live a life free of violence. Domestic and sexual violence are not only horrific crimes, they're also a significant and preventable barrier to women's full equality. It will not be tolerated in Ontario.

We want to thank the leader of the third party for bringing this PMB forward. It is a priority for this government that women feel safe in their homes, in their workplaces and in their communities. This is a top priority for our government, that women have that sense of security and safety. We understand and we recognize the severity of this issue and the impact it can have on people in their workplaces and at home. We heard the leader of the third party give us an explanation on people who have faced that danger within their workplaces, and no one should have to feel that when they're at work.

That is why through Bill 148, which this government has introduced, which we brought forward, we're proposing to establish a new, separate leave for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. This is very important. It's going to entitle employees who have worked for 13 consecutive weeks to 10 days and 15 weeks of leave when they or their children experience domestic or sexual violence or the threat of domestic or sexual violence.

We believe that workers and their families need time and support when they're dealing with these tremen-

dously difficult circumstances. This leave would afford them that time. That bill is going to be coming before the House very shortly for another reading, and we hope that we can engage in a good discussion at that time. We look forward to having support from the opposition on that. We want to see it go through.

We have launched a groundbreaking action plan called It's Never Okay that is investing \$41 million over three years, and we've implemented many initiatives to raise awareness of domestic violence and to strengthen supports for victims since 2004.

You may recall that in late 2014 there was the case of Jian Ghomeshi at the CBC with allegations against him that were very disturbing. Canadians were talking about this, and we began talking about it here in the Ontario Legislature. That's when we moved forward with our plan on It's Never Okay. We had some groundbreaking commercials that ran on TV and on social media and received tremendous awareness and feedback around the world. In fact, online there were over eight million hits. People were watching these ads and saying how useful they were, they were revolutionary and they certainly got the message out.

The Ministry of Labour's Occupational Health and Safety Act is the only legislation of its kind in Canada to require employers to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect a worker when domestic violence may occur in the workplace. Workplaces in Ontario are also required to have workplace violence policies, programs, measures and procedures in place to protect workers from violence in the workplace, including domestic and sexual violence that may enter the workplace. We already have measures there.

Through Bill 148, we want to build on that. There's always more that we can do, and we do thank the leader of the third party for engaging us in this very important discussion this afternoon.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure and honour to speak to this today. I want to thank the leader of the third party for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature. I will allow my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock to speak on it more on the women's issue side, and I commend her for the tremendous work that she has done on our behalf in the PC Party for issues relating to the very important issue of safety and protection for women who find themselves in abusive relationships or situations.

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I had the opportunity to travel the province this summer on Bill 148, which was changes to the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act, and this bill, specifically, is amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I had the opportunity to listen to an awful lot of deputations. One of the deputations that came forward requesting an amendment to Bill 148 specifically spoke about the need to have paid leave for people, almost

exclusively women—not exclusively, but mostly, the vast majority—who find themselves in an abusive situation and need to find a way to hopefully get out of that or at least end that situation.

She spoke clearly about the need to have that time: the time to go see a lawyer, to see victim services, to perhaps find another place to live, either temporarily or permanently—that all of those things take time, and what could not be done was to tip off the abuser that that person was away from work. The most certain way to tip off that abuser is if there's a stoppage in the pay, because rest assured, if someone is living in an abusive relationship, that person they are with is controlling in so many ways, they would know exactly, to every nickel, whether they are making or not making that dollar. They would be watching closely to see any signs that they could be moving in a way that might end that relationship for their own safety, for the victim's safety.

So I understood why it had to be, that paid leave, but then I spoke to the lady afterwards and I said, "The reality of life here in Ontario in small business is that 10 paid days of leave can be very, very difficult for a small business." I asked her, "What about if the state, the crown, us—if we believe as a society that we have a responsibility to protect women in abusive relationships, then if we're going to have paid leave"—I wasn't speaking to her in that fashion; I was speaking to the Legislature—"then we should be paying for it: our Legislature, our province, our crown." She said, "That would be wonderful." I put forward the thought of it and she said, "That would be wonderful."

Then I spoke to two labour leaders about it and they thought that was a good idea. I spoke to my colleague from Welland, my counterpart in the third party. Again, she said, "We want to do whatever we can to protect women in these situations. If it happens that the money can come from a central source, then so be it."

My suggestion would be that the employer pay upfront, because we can't send up any flags. But then they could apply as quickly as possible to get reimbursement from the crown so that nobody knows what's going on except the victim and the employer—who would be confidentially protecting them as well—and we, as a Legislature and society, would make sure that we do our part to end this scourge of violence against women.

If people are in abusive relationships, we have a responsibility to protect them and to ensure that they have a way out in the surest way possible. Thank you to the leader of the third party for bringing this. We will be supporting this piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is my great honour to rise as MPP for London West and also the women's issues critic for the Ontario NDP caucus to speak in support of Bill 157.

I want to congratulate the member for bringing forward this bill. It certainly builds on the work that I have done previously in Bill 177 and Bill 26 to ensure

that every survivor of domestic violence and sexual violence in this province has access to paid leave to help them recover from the trauma that they have experienced.

I want to focus in my brief remarks on one of the provisions that's included in Bill 157 that is particularly important if we are to ensure that women in this province are safe. That is the requirement for mandatory workplace training on domestic violence and sexual violence. We need to sensitize employers, managers and co-workers to the physical impacts and the psychological impacts of experiencing domestic violence and sexual violence so that when they get the request for leave, they understand why that leave is so critical to enable that employee to move forward and rebuild their lives.

We also need to reduce the feeling of an employee who has experienced domestic violence or sexual violence that they may be stigmatized by their co-workers. We need to make co-workers aware of some of the warning signs so that they can provide assistance, perhaps referrals to some of the community organizations that could help a co-worker who is experiencing domestic violence or sexual violence. This provision for mandatory training is critical to truly ensure that the leave provisions will be accessed and that employees will feel comfortable using their right to access the leave.

One of the unintended consequences of not providing paid leave, of just making unpaid leave available, which is what the Liberals have done, is that survivors may not be able to access that leave when they need it. They may not have the financial means to take an unpaid leave of absence and they will not step forward to request that unpaid leave.

We also know that financial control is a classic symptom of an abusive partner. When the abuser has control over the finances, the victim, the survivor of domestic violence, may not be able to leave the employment or discontinue bringing those resources into the household because of the fear of further violence being perpetrated. Again, this is another consequence of not providing paid leave.

We need to move forward with this legislation. We need to acknowledge our responsibility as a society to compensate, to assist victims and survivors and help them recover and heal from the trauma of domestic violence and sexual violence.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's a pleasure to rise in this House this afternoon to weigh in on this debate. I want to start by thanking the leader of the third party for bringing this PMB forward. So, thank you for that.

I think it's been said here already, and I think it's very much something that most people believe in, that all people believe in, that everyone has the right to live a life free of violence. Domestic and sexual violence are not only horrific crimes, they're also a significant and preventable barrier to women's full equality, and will not be tolerated in Ontario. It is a priority for this government

that women feel safe in the home, workplaces, schools, college campuses, university campuses and communities.

That is why our government introduced, in 2004, the Domestic Violence Action Plan. The Ministry of the Status of Women has implemented a number of initiatives to raise awareness of domestic violence, strengthen supports for survivors and improve the justice system response.

In essence, as we know, sexual violence is a brutal and traumatic crime, and the reality is, it is far too widespread in our society and has a devastating and lasting impact on survivors and their families.

In fact, one in three women will experience some form of violence in their life, and this is unacceptable. We cannot tolerate this in our province. That is why we have taken action and launched It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment in March 2015, as my colleague from Kitchener Centre referred to in her debate.

During the second year of the sexual violence and harassment action plan, we have made progress. We are investing \$1.7 million in training for front-line workers in health, education, community and hospitality sectors to identify and support survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence. As you know, we can only help individuals, the victims of sexual violence and harassment, if we've got the proper systems in place and the proper know-how, knowledge and education to be able to identify it—there's still a lot of stigma around sexual violence and harassment—and that we have the appropriate training for those front-line workers who see many of these victims.

1400

We have also established an Innovation Fund. This \$3-million initiative supports seven survivor-focused projects to help those at higher risk of violence.

We've also established the Creative Engagement Fund, which is a three-year, \$2.25-million initiative that supports artistic projects that raise awareness and spark discussion about sexual violence and harassment.

The government of Ontario, as part of its Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, recognizes the trauma experienced by sexual assault survivors in the criminal justice system. That's why we delivered a pilot project to provide independent legal advice to survivors. These important steps improve access to justice for survivors of sexual assault while enhancing the tools and knowledge of the judiciary to deal with sexual assault cases.

I was part of the committee that travelled the province this summer to hear deputations on Bill 148, on the Changing Workplaces Review. It was a priority for many of the women's advocacy groups that spoke to committee that 10 paid days of leave for domestic and sexual violence needed to happen, that it's a priority. That was reiterated throughout the committee process for Bill 148, regardless of which city we were in or which town, whether it was in the north, southwestern Ontario or eastern Ontario.

In the first draft of the bill, domestic and sexual violence were added as reasons to utilize personal emergency leave days, two of which are paid. Following public hearings, we amended the bill to establish a new, separate leave for domestic and sexual violence or the threat of domestic or sexual violence.

We followed the model that is currently being used in Manitoba and are proposing 10 days and 15 unpaid weeks of leave, providing options to take single days or full weeks, allowing for more flexibility for the employee. An employee is entitled to this leave if they have worked for an employer for 13 consecutive weeks and if they or their child experiences domestic or sexual violence or the threat of domestic or sexual violence. The leave could be taken for reasons such as: to seek medical attention, to obtain services from a victims' services organization, to obtain psychological or other professional counselling, to relocate temporarily or permanently, to seek legal or law enforcement assistance, or other reasons as may be prescribed.

Madam Speaker, we have listened. We have made amendments. Is there more work to be done? Perhaps there is more work to be done. But the fact that we are talking about this here today—this very important discussion that we are having is important because the more we speak about it, the less stigma there will be around the issue. We understand and recognize the severity of this issue and the impact it can have on individuals in their workplace, at home and in their communities. I want to thank the leader of the third party once again for engaging us here today in this important discussion.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to rise today to speak to the private member's bill tabled by my colleague the member from Hamilton Centre and the leader of the third party. First of all, I want to commend my colleague for presenting this legislation, which my colleagues in the official opposition are pleased to support. The bill is consistent with the recommendations outlined in the 2015 report made by the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, which I was proud to be a member of, and several members are here in the Legislature today also.

It is such a straightforward but very important measure that can truly help survivors of sexual violence recover from unimaginable and incredibly traumatizing experiences. As an advocate for human sex trafficking victims, I've spent the past two years travelling across the province, meeting with survivors and the front-line workers helping them. I've been brought to tears on numerous occasions, learning about the mental and emotional scars left behind by sexual abuse and exploitation and the difficulties that survivors face as they recover.

One of the most important challenges is helping survivors restore their sense of dignity, and a big part of that is helping them return to work so that they are able to support themselves and they're not trapped in an abusive relationship if they cannot do that.

The effects of sexual abuse and exploitation take time to heal, and survivors need to know that they have the support of their community, including their employer. That is where the leaves of absence defined in this bill, with 10 days of paid leave and up to 15 weeks of unpaid leave, would be so helpful. Giving survivors the peace of mind of knowing that they can take the time that they need to heal without having to worry about facing negative consequences at work or losing their job will go a long way in helping them focus on healing and recovery.

An important part of implementing this legislation will involve ensuring that employers are not only aware of these changes, but are also trained to understand the sensitivity of the issues surrounding sexual abuse and violence. Survivors often are afraid to talk about the abuse that they have experienced with their loved ones, let alone their employers. Much like I argue through my own private member's bill calling for mandatory sexual assault training for judges, victims and survivors need to be confident that our institutions will be sensitive to their experiences to prevent them from being revictimized.

Once this bill is passed and reaches the committee stage, I hope that it is brought forward by the government for debate. I think we've waited long enough to make these changes.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank our leader, Andrea Horwath, and our member from London West, Peggy Sattler, for bringing forward this important bill and this issue and putting it in the forefront.

I want to do a shout-out to the women's shelter in my area, Women's Place South Niagara in Welland, and Nova House in Niagara Falls, two sister organizations who have come together in times of need to actually try to save administration costs. So they have been one organization since 1997 and they do a great job. Their leadership and their workers and volunteers ensure that our communities have the supports that they need within their financial obligations. On Saturday, November 4, they are doing a fundraiser: a five-kilometre walk, a beach party, as part of Woman Abuse Prevention Month, starting at the Seaway Mall, to help wipe out domestic violence in our communities. On that piece, I'm grateful that we have them in our community.

But I want to speak to the member from Davenport about the Bill 148 here that our member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talked about. Yes, we travelled this province and we listened to many presentations, and in each and every one of those presentations we were told that victims of domestic violence needed paid leave: not two days of PEL, paid emergency leave, which actually applies to sick leave or bereavement leave, or whatever other emergency leave in your life. They needed 10 days of leave. The government listened, but they did not hear them. In fact, when the NDP brought forward amendments during clause-by-clause, the government members voted them down.

So you can talk a good talk over there, but at the end of the day, these women need more than two days of PEL. So I hope the government actually supports this bill, and that when we get to committee, they will support 10 days of PEL.

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

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to the private member's bill presented by the member from Hamilton Centre and also the leader of the third party. I want to commend her for bringing this very important issue to the House.

I had the pleasure of joining the select committee as the only male from this caucus on the panel chaired by the member from Kitchener Centre. I heard first-hand during the travel and during the tour to parts of the province what sexual harassment and violence could do to a human being. It's mind-boggling what you hear, stories from lived experience.

1410

I agree with the member from Davenport. She cited a few ongoing plans, including the Domestic Violence Action Plan as well as the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan—that these are in the works already.

I also want to bring attention to the consultation that's taking place right now, and that is the gender-based violence strategy consultation. It's conducted by Ministry of the Status of Women as well as the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This is to—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, would like to commend the leader of the third party for initiating this private member's bill, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Protection Act, 2017. I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleagues who have already spoken in the rest of our caucus. I'm pleased to say that we will be supporting this private member's bill.

Sexual assault is experienced by Canadian women every day at home, at work, at school and on the street. We need to take this seriously and we need to work toward ending sexual assault.

One of the statistics I read was that there were 7,600 sexual assaults reported to police in Ontario in 2014—a staggering number. Yet it's estimated that almost 90% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. For this reason, we have to do more to support victims.

In my riding, we're fortunate to have the team at the Women's House, which is dedicated to protecting women and children facing domestic or workplace sexual assault or violence. I have been a proud supporter of the Women's House, serving Bruce and Grey, and have been taking part in Walk a Mile in Her Shoes events held in June at Harrison Park in Owen Sound. This is when men like me walk the streets in high-heeled shoes to express support for women and help raise awareness to end domestic violence.

I want to acknowledge people across the province. Many of our caucus colleagues represent our commu-

ities in these very special events. I want to commend everyone who participates in any capacity.

I've also participated in the "Helping through Handbags" auction as the auctioneer, to raise money to fund the necessary resources that save the lives of women and children, such as ensuring they have a safe environment to escape to and recover from their abusers. Next month, they will be holding a gala to raise money to cover operational costs not funded by the government.

I would be remiss if I didn't address that ongoing concern about the lack of funding and the resulting patchwork access to supports and community-based services like housing, mental health for victims, and all other resources and tools necessary to help victims heal from an abusive relationship or situation. We've heard it here a lot of times. I'll say it again: It's back to that training across the industry, even in our courts, so that sensitivity is there for when people go through these very traumatic events, not only for the victim but for their families, to recover fully.

That is why events such as the gala, the walk and others help to raise awareness, recruit volunteers and funds to support the Women's House in my riding. It actually provides services as well in the riding of my friend and colleague Lisa Thompson from Huron—Bruce. In recent celebration of their local support, Women's House recognized their volunteers and celebrated close to \$150,000 in donations it had received over past years.

I want to recognize my colleague, friend and Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock MPP Laurie Scott, who has done a stellar job raising awareness of these issues across Ontario and calling attention to the need for this government to provide such resources. Back in 2014, she put forward an opposition day motion on behalf of the PC caucus to strike the select committee that then worked to make recommendations to help prevent sexual violence and harassment. That committee, as she referenced, was struck in 2015. It went across the province studying. What we need to do is make sure that all of that effort is not in vain. We need to see action. This is like a lot of things we talk about in here: We study a lot and we spend a lot of money on things to understand the situation, but what do we do? Actions speak louder than words.

I want to reinforce what my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said when he rose to speak. It's very important. If we're truly going to be serious, if we really are going to be sincere and say that we want to make this a priority and have the resources for those people in times of sexual assault and violence, then we need to step up. We need the government to ensure that there's proper funding all the way through the system: the proper training at the front end so that people are qualified and available when those things happen; we need the resources to be there so people have the facilities and resources available when they go through those traumatic situations; and that they actually have a safe place.

That's one of the things that my goddaughter Genielle Hay—she has been professionally trained. She went to

school for this, and she's going to hopefully to find a path in her career. It's a very, very specific skill set to be able to work in these types of trying circumstances. I think we need to always ensure that they have the proper training, resources and support so that when these traumatic events happen in our lives, particularly to women who suffer at the hands of an abuser, we have them in our minds, that they have the ability to have comfort and support and a safe space so they know that we have them—that we are there for them in their time of need, and to ensure that those funding dollars are always going to meet the need at the time they need it in a very timely and compassionate way.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je commence en remerciant ma leader, la députée de Hamilton-Centre, Andrea Horwath, pour avoir amené ce projet de loi, un projet de loi qui vise à aider les victimes d'agression sexuelle et de violence conjugale. Le projet de loi est plutôt simple, mais peut changer des vies.

Dans un premier temps, le gouvernement paiera jusqu'à 10 jours de salaire pour une femme qui est victime d'agression sexuelle ou de violence conjugale, si elle doit s'absenter du travail. Les femmes auront droit à 15 semaines de congé sans solde. Souvent, après une agression sexuelle ou de multiples agressions sexuelles ou de violence conjugale, on doit déménager. On doit s'occuper des enfants, on doit aller à la cour, on doit suivre des thérapies, aller voir les policiers, etc. Tout ça prend du temps. Comme société, on veut aider ces femmes-là.

La troisième partie du projet de loi vise l'éducation des employeurs puisque, si c'est une de leurs employées qui vient les voir pour s'absenter du travail, il faut que les employeurs comprennent l'importance de ces absences, autant pour le chemin de la guérison que pour protéger les femmes qui—on le sait tous, souvent les abuseurs ne sont plus capables de suivre les femmes mais savent où elles travaillent. Ça, c'est souvent l'endroit le plus dangereux pour elles. Elles doivent se rendre au travail parce qu'elles n'ont pas le choix.

Donc, le projet de loi fait ça. Ce sont trois mesures simples, trois mesures où il semble avoir bon accord dans les trois partis pour passer le projet de loi.

Maintenant, je vais vous demander : n'offrez pas de faux espoirs. Surtout pour le parti libéral : si vous n'avez aucune intention d'aller de l'avant et de vous assurer que le projet de loi deviendra réalité, ne donnez pas aux victimes d'agression sexuelle de faux espoirs en laissant passer le projet de loi pour, après ça, n'y avoir aucun suivi.

Dans le nord de l'Ontario, nous sommes chanceux d'avoir le Centre Victoria, un organisme au service des femmes francophones qui luttent contre toutes les formes de violence. Comme tous les centres qui s'occupent des femmes, elles n'ont pas vu d'augmentation de budget depuis très longtemps et font du mieux qu'elles peuvent avec les ressources qu'elles ont—font du merveilleux travail.

Mais ces femmes-là, au tout début, ont besoin de notre respect. Si on est pour adopter le projet de loi, que ça soit pour que ça soit une réalité, pas pour donner de faux espoirs.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do want to give some context to this debate because in the province of Ontario right now, every community across this province is fundraising to keep women's shelter beds open. In Waterloo region last spring, 26 beds closed. We should not be fundraising to keep women safe in the province of Ontario. We have to be more respectful of the voices of victims, of survivors.

I will tell you, this morning when Dawnmarie was asked by the media what was her predominant emotion and her feeling, what was she thinking about as she was trying to leave a violent situation, she said it was fear. It was fear. She was afraid for her children. She was afraid for her safety. She was afraid of poverty. That is the core of this debate today. This was a woman who, she told us this morning, was making \$50,000 a year. She had 100% benefits. She was providing for her family. When she tried to save herself, she lost her job. She ended up in abject poverty. She suffered from mental illness because of the stress of that experience.

The Liberals say that they have made this a priority. Well, I challenge the Liberal government on that, for sure, because you had a chance. This government had a chance, at Bill 148 this summer, to make it right. You had that chance, and you did not take it. But you have this chance. We have given you this opportunity to do the right thing for women and survivors of domestic violence in the province of Ontario.

1420

The issue of economic costs came up, obviously, this summer. I want to tell you that Australia, who have moved ahead of us, said that the estimated broad economic cost of violence against women from their partners is a total of \$12.6 billion in Australia. A very conservative estimate in this country is \$78 million nationwide. You should not have to cost out the impact of domestic violence on women in 2017. We should not have to factor in what it's going to cost to keep women and their children safe. I hope we can come to some consensus on that.

I want to cite this report. This report is actually Economic Aspects of Paid Domestic Violence Leave Provisions. It was done by Jim Stanford, previously of Ontario, previously of Canada. This report says, "Any discussion of the incremental costs associated with measures to prevent domestic violence (like paid leave) must occur in the context of an understanding of the enormous economic costs (not to mention personal and social costs) associated with family and domestic violence. In this regard, the status quo is not 'free.'"

So what I want to say to this government is that the cost of apathy—the cost of taking small baby steps on a societal issue that affects every woman across this province, indirectly or directly—is too high. Do the right thing today and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I now return to the leader of the third party to wrap up.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say I was happy to hear from all of the members from all parties their understanding of how important this issue is and how important it is to try to address the gaps that we have now that leave women with no choices and no options when they are in a situation of domestic violence or sexual violence.

What is a bit worrisome is that we have a government that continues to suggest that amendments that they have made to legislation that's before the Legislature, frankly, legislation that we will be debating in this chamber over the next number of days and weeks—that they are still not understanding or that they refuse to acknowledge what every other expert has said, and what the Conservatives have said in the remarks they have made, and that is that two days of personal leave is not enough. Personal emergency leave is something that people need when they get a call from the neighbour that there's a flood on the street and they need to run home, or personal emergency leave is when you get a call from the school and you've got to run over there to deal with something that has happened with your child at school.

This leave is leave that's specific to women who are experiencing domestic or sexual violence. It's leave that they need to pull their lives back together, to go to the lawyer, to find a place where they and their kids can stay once they leave, to get the counselling and the supports and the services that they need to be well and to be able to function again.

This is not something that's easy to deal with. This is something that is tragic, it's horrifying, and it will affect these women's lives forever, and it will affect their children's lives forever.

Let's do the right thing and give them half a chance of building a positive life for them and their kids, and pass this legislation.

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

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should partner with the town of Halton Hills to develop a long-term transportation strategy for the town, including a review of the need for a Highway 7 Acton bypass, taking into account the need for improved safety, efficiency, and economic development opportunities.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Madam Speaker, since the provincial riding boundaries were changed in time for the 2007 provincial election, creating many new ridings, it has been my privilege and honour to represent the people of the town of Halton Hills here in the Legislature.

I assumed this responsibility directly from our former colleague Ted Chudleigh, who served here with distinction for many years. In addition, I am cognizant of the fact that I serve as a successor to former MPPs who represented Halton Hills communities, like Noel Duignan, Julian Reed, Jim Snow and George Kerr, all of whom are well remembered for their many years of public service in the Legislature.

While my family and I live in Fergus, it is my pleasure to spend a significant portion of my time in Halton Hills as their member of provincial Parliament. Within our municipal boundary in Halton Hills, the larger communities of Georgetown and Acton are surrounded by pastoral countryside and a long list of smaller but distinct communities.

As part of the region of Halton, we are officially considered to be part of the greater Toronto area, or GTA. But we are not Toronto. We are unique. We have our own issues, challenges and opportunities that are different than those faced by the city. We may be "in" the GTA, but many of us would say that we are not "of" the GTA.

The standing orders limit my remarks on this resolution this afternoon to 12 minutes, but I could readily fill 12 hours of the Legislature's time just talking about the community organizations I've encountered and supported, the people I've met and heard from, the businesses which create the jobs, the farms that feed us, the non-profits which support those in need, the cultural activities that nourish our collective spirit, the churches which inspire us and give us hope, the sport and recreational opportunities that abound—in short, the dynamic life of the town of Halton Hills.

In presenting this resolution, I'm glad to be working with Mayor Rick Bonnette and the council and staff of the town of Halton Hills, as well as Regional Chair Gary Carr and the council and staff of the region of Halton. We are proud of our past and forward-looking to the opportunities of the future, and it is that foresight that motivates this resolution that we debate today.

While it is absolutely true that our party has been the official opposition in recent years, it is also true that I have sought to work with my colleagues in the PC caucus, as well as reach out to MPPs in other parties in order to get things done. I do this again today.

Now, let's look at the wording of this resolution.

We are asking the Minister of Transportation to partner with the town of Halton Hills on what we call a long-term transportation study for the town, a simple, straightforward request and, really, a relatively modest proposal.

In our news release a few days ago, announcing that our resolution had been tabled and this debate would be taking place today, I said, "Transportation issues have emerged as urgent challenges in our riding, in part because of the planned growth that has been imposed upon us by the province's Places to Grow strategy. Mayor Bonnette and town council have done a great job of looking to the future, and together we're asking the provincial government to partner with us in this process."

Mayor Bonnette stated this: “Responsible planning means it’s important that the town’s transportation agenda is advanced so as to best meet current and future needs. I’m pleased that our local provincial representative recognizes and supports our efforts to meet and manage the impacts that accompany designated growth targets.”

Regional Chair Gary Carr wrote to me yesterday to add his voice in support. “We really need the minister to act,” Mr. Carr wrote.

When Gary Carr and I were first elected to this House in 1990, it was not uncommon for MPPs to ask that a ministry do a study of a specific problem in their riding or area, seeking to quantify the depth and scope of the problem and identify possible solutions. If the request was sensible and reasonable, in many cases, provincial staff would be assigned to the task, a study would be commenced and undertaken, possible solutions would be identified, and a course of action would be charted. This is the kind of support we need from the Ministry of Transportation and the minister today.

But this isn’t the first time we’ve asked. On numerous occasions in the past, the town of Halton Hills council and staff have made the point that the province needs to look at the traffic situation on Highway 7 through the town, especially given the fact that this highway seems to be the preferred east-west trucking route for aggregates between provincially identified aggregate resource areas and the high-growth areas of Brampton and north Toronto. As a member of provincial Parliament, I, too, have heard many complaints about the volume of truck traffic, most notably in Acton and Norval.

Almost two years ago, the town of Halton Hills council passed a resolution on November 30, 2015, asking the province to partner with it on a long-term truck strategy, as they called it at the time. I supported their position and I went to work seeking a meeting with the Minister of Transportation on their behalf. After a few weeks, the meeting was set up, and on January 20, 2016, we met with the minister at his Queen’s Park boardroom and put the case for a partnership before him.

The town offered to budget approximately \$100,000 for the study and asked the ministry to do likewise. Other issues raised with the minister that day included the likely need for an Acton bypass because of extremely heavy truck traffic through downtown Acton, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the GTA West Corridor study and the resulting implications for Highway 7 and its associated connecting links through Acton, Georgetown and Norval. While the minister received us politely, seemed to listen and assured us he would review the concerns we’d raised, he did not commit to helping to pay for the needed study.

1430

We were disappointed but we were not deterred, for we in Wellington–Halton Hills never, ever give up. The mayor of Halton Hills and senior town staff have also followed up with the minister at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—or AMO—at the AMO

conferences in 2016 and 2017 and at yet another meeting with the minister on April 29, 2017, just a few months ago. I, too, have raised the issue many times and in many ways to support the town’s position. We’ve been told in response that the MTO staff believe that there is no technical justification to partner with the town on this. Again, with respect, we disagree.

The town is so serious that they’ve decided to go ahead and commit their own funding for phase 1 of the truck strategy. The town continues to request that MTO partner on at least phase 2 of the work, to study the issue through and around Acton. This request was reiterated once again this past Monday night, in effect, when town council passed a motion explicitly supporting the private member’s resolution we are debating right now. Once again, we ask the Minister of Transportation to listen to this request and work with his staff to try to find a way to help.

It seems appropriate at this point to mention that the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce has expressed written support for our resolution. On September 20, the chamber’s general manager, Kathleen Dills, wrote this: “As an urban community built on major highways, congestion and safety are becoming critical issues, particularly when these highways intersect such as in the Acton downtown core.

“Highway 7 is a major east-west option for trucks and we have seen the traffic significantly increasing every year. Our businesses need to have effective access to major markets they are serving to be competitive and cost-efficient, and access to the 401 corridor is critical. Our employees also need to be able to get to work quickly.”

The Acton Business Improvement Area, or BIA, has weighed in as well in support of our resolution. Acton BIA manager Sheena Switzer added this: “Downtown Acton is located at a major crossroads of provincial Highways 7 and 25. Our downtown sees hundreds of large commercial trucks pass through its core. Residential and commercial growth is adding to the congestion along Highway 7, especially with commercial vehicles—we are a major east-west corridor for those wishing to avoid the 401.

“Safety of our patrons, residents and business owners is paramount, as is the economic vitality of our downtown. Our windows rattle, streets are dusty and dirty from gravel trucks, and patrons are unable to have conversations on the street due to the extreme loudness of the trucks passing through. Sidewalk sales are a thing of the past, and our retail sector is struggling.” The Acton BIA supports our resolution, calling it “much needed.”

Good points, representing the views of our business community. We see why an Acton bypass may be necessary and why we should begin to plan for it.

There are other transportation issues in Halton Hills that need to be considered in the context of this debate. We need new jobs. Last December, Mayor Bonnette announced that Futura Properties had committed to a \$30-million investment for a business development at a

property known as 340 Main Street, Acton. This 55-acre site had previously sat idle for some 15 years, having been designated for industrial uses. And remember, Acton's development has been limited by proximity to the greenbelt and a limited supply of water and sewage capacity.

The region sought to help and has invested \$44 million in infrastructure. This past summer, almost all of the necessary approvals were in place to see the first tenant in a 150,000-square-foot building by the end of this year, including the construction of a rail spur.

However, having been kept apprised of the development all along and appearing to have few concerns, at the eleventh hour the MTO pulled the rug out from under town council due to, they said, issues associated with access to Highway 7 and the need for an environmental assessment study. It appears that the length of time that this would take possibly places the entire proposed development in jeopardy. I understand that MTO staff and town staff continue to meet to discuss this matter, and we're hopeful of a positive resolution. But I urge the minister to take an interest in this. Again, we need those jobs.

I need to mention the Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study, which was endorsed by town council in 2010 and was to address the commuter and truck traffic capacity issues on Highway 7 through Georgetown and Norval. A pause on the implementation of this study's recommended north-south and east-west corridors by the participating municipalities was agreed to, pending the outcome of the ministry's GTA West Corridor study, which had actually commenced around 2007.

In December 2015, the MTO suspended the GTA west study, supposedly to have a panel review the progress to date and ensure it was consistent with other government policies and objectives. Almost two years later, we're still waiting for the public release of the panel's recommendations. The traffic problems in Georgetown and Norval continue to worsen, while at the same time the development of Halton Hills 401 employment lands are frozen, and again, the creation of jobs we need goes on hold. We need the minister's help with this as well, as I was reminded yesterday by Councillor Bryan Lewis, who has been a strong supporter of a Norval bypass.

I hope that during today's debate, the government will update us on the progress they've made towards keeping their 2014 election commitment to all-day, two-way GO train service from Kitchener-Waterloo to Union Station with stops in Wellington-Halton Hills, something I've supported as well.

I hope the government will acknowledge the important role that the town of Halton Hills had in the decision to widen 18 kilometres of the 401, from Mississauga to Milton, announced on April 10, which was a recommendation of the Hatch Mott MacDonald study that the town commissioned as a better option than building a new highway along the alternative 4-3 route, which the GTA West Corridor study had suggested and that town council and I had opposed.

I hope the government will also respond to our request for traffic signals at the intersection of Guelph Street—Highway 7—and McFarlane Drive/Hall Road in Georgetown near the Sands condominium building, another transportation issue we've been raising for some time.

In closing, I hope the government members present here today will vote for our resolution.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm here this afternoon in my role as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

I'd like to start by thanking the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for bringing forward this motion, this debate, this afternoon on a long-time transportation strategy for the town of Halton Hills, which includes a review of the Highway 7 Acton bypass.

In a previous life, when I worked as a news journalist, I had the opportunity on many occasions to interview the member on different issues.

Who knows? Maybe if I were still doing that job, I'd interview you on this particular issue, which is very important.

Keeping our roads safe and helping families to get to where they need to go, faster, are top priorities for our government, and our record does speak to that. We're investing in roads and transit projects in every corner of the province, and we're doing this at a historic rate.

Speaker, earlier this week, we welcomed, you'll remember, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations to Queen's Park. They were here for an information day. I had a chance to sit down and meet with some local stakeholders from my community of Kitchener Centre, and they thanked me for the enormous investment that this government is making in infrastructure at this time. In fact, I could probably use my entire debate time this afternoon highlighting the list of investments our government has made in Waterloo region. I'll just mention a couple of them today, including our \$300-million investment in the ION LRT project; our work to widen Highway 401 from six to 10 lanes between Kitchener and Cambridge; and widening and realigning Shirley Avenue in advance of the Victoria Street bridge that's going to come down and be rebuilt as a flyover for new Highway 7. These are just some of the investments that matter to my community.

We know that fixing solutions to address truck traffic and the use of this stretch of highway that we're talking about this afternoon as an aggregate haul route are top priorities for the community represented by the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. Speaker, I'm aware that the Minister of Transportation has met with officials in the town of Halton Hills on this very issue. They expressed concerns related to road safety and congestion. Our government knows just how important it is to listen to the needs of our local towns and cities and to take action where it is appropriate. That's why we're pleased to hear that in addition to meeting with town officials to hear

their concerns, the Ministry of Transportation is currently an active participant in the feasibility study being led by the town of Halton Hills on this very issue. Most recently, the ministry attended a stakeholders' workshop that took place in May of this year. It's clear that the province is at the table on this issue.

The town will be undertaking this important study in two separate phases. At this point in time, the town is currently moving forward on phase 1, which they expect to complete by the end of this year. Phase 1 is going to examine long-term transportation alternatives to accommodate truck traffic within Acton.

I can assure the member, and every other member of this House, that the ministry is going to continue to actively participate in this study. Beyond that, I know that the ministry is going to carry out a thorough review of the results and assess appropriate next steps once this phase is complete. At that time, we're going to need to see if there's anything else that we can do at the provincial level to improve both the safety and the efficiency of this stretch of Highway 7.

1440

Speaker, beyond participating in this important study, we have supported and will continue to support the priorities of communities across the province, including Halton Hills. Highway 7 through Acton is a connecting link, and the government has just committed nearly \$800,000 through the last two intakes of the Connecting Links Program.

Our support does not stop there. We continue to support the town's top priorities by initiating a study to address the need for traffic signals and improvements at the intersection of Main Street North and Highway 7, and by resurfacing three sections of the highway, which will be completed by the summer of 2018.

So whether it's investing in road projects or working with our municipal partners to address key concerns in their communities, our government has consistently shown that we are at the table. And I know that we're going to continue to do exactly that, both in his community and right across the province.

I want to thank the member for Wellington-Halton Hills for bringing forward this motion and for his continued advocacy in his community.

Let me just say, personally, that I've always admired your work, and I appreciate that you are fighting for your community. Thank you for bringing this forward.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to participate and support the resolution of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

The previous speaker is absolutely right: There has been a long history of advocacy and support. When I first came here and served as an MPP, I think that I heard the words "Morrison bypass" every week that we sat in this chamber, and it was because the member—at that point, it wasn't Wellington-Halton Hills; there have been a few iterations over the years—regularly and consistently was

reminding the government of the day of the need for the Morrison bypass. So there is a history of success with this particular MPP. I should probably study his playbook a little more carefully, because many of us have these challenges in our communities.

I remember very well when then-Premier Ernie Eves announced some provincial funding for the Orangeville bypass and the Bolton bypass. I can tell you, those were game-changers. We now have two vibrant downtown communities that are not dealing with truck traffic, that were able to rebuild their economic core and, frankly, their livability because the truck traffic and the through traffic, which had no interest in stopping, was not bogging up our downtowns anymore.

I'm challenged now, locally, with Shelburne. Many of you in the chamber would know that Shelburne has Highway 10 and Highway 89 as part of the provincial highway system within its borders. It becomes very, very challenging for people who are trying to shop and visit and be part of those communities because, frankly, the traffic that just wants to get through is in a hurry and there's too much of it. It has been a real danger. We had a near-fatality this summer, with a woman with a walker attempting to cross. She got hit by a truck that was in a hurry.

Anything we can do to pull together these strategies to ensure that our communities are able to be strong and safe, I think, are noble causes. I support the call for a long-term transportation strategy. My only request would be, once you've done it in Halton Hills, please move on to Dufferin-Caledon, because we need it there too.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I am pleased to be asked to comment on the proposed bill by my friend Mr. Arnott, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

As you know, Speaker, the member is known and appreciated for being a moderate and for reaching across party lines. He has been kicking around these halls for many years—first, for three years as an executive assistant to a former member, and then as the MPP for his area since 1990. He's currently one of the longest-serving members and someone we could all learn a thing or two from when it comes to civility in this chamber.

On this bill, he has certainly done his homework. He has the support of the mayor and council in Halton Hills, as we heard this afternoon, as well as his regional chair, Gary Carr. He has been working with them on their priorities when it comes to their future needs. They've made transportation a key priority, and this bill is in front of us because the council needs a provincial partner. They have a provincial partner in Mr. Arnott, but they also need a government partner.

His riding is in a high-growth area, partially because of the Places to Grow strategy introduced by the Liberal government. Not only have the mayor and council planned for this future growth, but they've done so in a responsible manner. They have the growth targets. They know how to get there. They realize the impacts these

goals will have on the traffic patterns, and the increase in traffic volumes that will be generated. They are also very cognizant of the safety concerns that this increase in traffic will generate.

They don't want to turn their backs on the economic development potential that's just over the horizon, so they need to look at innovative partnerships with the province. For example, they're calling for a review of the need for a bypass on Highway 7 at Acton. While increased development can be a good thing, it can bring a lot more of those big, heavy transport trucks to the area. That's a safety issue unto itself. Road patterns, road load restrictions, traffic signals and traffic speeds all come into play.

They have a shopping list: Highway 7 through Halton Hills, the Acton bypass, and that proposed new business development on Main Street in Acton. Don't forget the transportation study that affects Norval, Georgetown and the Halton-Peel boundary area and, of course, the widening of the 401. And they say you might as well toss in there the all-day, two-way GO train, that service back and forth to Union Station with stops in Halton Hills. If that's not enough, and if I have this right, they also want to remind us of the need for a stoplight at that Guelph Street/McFarlane Drive/Hall Road intersection in Georgetown.

That's quite the wish list, and I hope they do well. No one is expecting a magic wand to drop from the sky and make all of this happen overnight, but maybe they could start with a \$100,000 study or something. But there is a need to get the conversation started and some first steps taken, because time is a-wasting here.

I know the Liberals have wasted too much time down my way on a transportation issue. Speaker, most of the members here remember Bruce Crozier, the former MPP for Essex. He spent 18 years in this House. Sadly, Bruce passed away suddenly, just a few days after he retired six years ago. In his honour, the Liberals named a section of the Highway 3 bypass Bruce Crozier's Way. They did some work on phase 1 of the project; then, sadly, it was shelved. It has been left to gather dust on a shelf and doesn't appear to be much of a priority any longer for this government, even though many of the current members were good friends with Bruce Crozier.

He was a man of honour. I always had great respect for Bruce. We called him "the tomato king." The Liberals have turned their backs on him. That's despite the fact that there are many—far too many—serious and deadly accidents on that stretch of highway every year. That highway connects the farming communities in Essex county and the hundreds of transport trucks needed to haul fresh produce daily to markets in the United States. It's also a major route for the thousands of tourists attracted to our wineries, beaches and small towns, and Point Pelee National Park. Of course, we have thousands of people living in the county but working in Windsor or Detroit, and folks living in Windsor but working in the county. In other words, it's a very busy and very dangerous stretch of highway.

The transportation minister has seen it. He joined the warden and local mayors on a trip when he was down in Windsor last year.

Bruce Crozier was a town councillor in Leamington and a former mayor before coming here in 1993. I don't know of anyone who didn't respect his work. He had been calling for the widening of that accident-prone highway since his time on town council, so it was a fitting tribute to name the highway in his honour.

What doesn't fit so well to the people down our way is the way his fellow Liberals have backed away from their commitment to make that stretch of highway more safe, in Bruce Crozier's name.

1450

The member for Essex, Taras Natyshak, has presented petitions in the House titled 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."

To Mr. Arnott and the council members in Halton Hills: Good luck today, and if you get an agreement, get it in writing.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's my pleasure to speak to motion 63, put forward by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Madam Speaker, it's very important that we listen to our communities' concerns, and that is why we are here. Regardless of our story, our goal is to do the best for our communities and to do the best for our citizens. I would like to acknowledge the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for doing that. It's the right thing to do.

As a government, we also take the needs of our municipal partners and regional governments very seriously. The motion put forward by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should partner with the town of Halton Hills to develop a long-term transportation strategy for the town, including a review of the need for a Highway 7 Acton bypass, taking into account the need for improved safety, efficiency, and economic development opportunities."

In this case, community concern relates to traffic congestion and road safety in Acton. Road safety, on this side of the House, is paramount to us. We all know that Ontario roads are among the safest in North America.

This summer, I had the opportunity to visit my brother and my nieces in Winnipeg for four or five days. While I was there, we decided to visit the Kenora area, which is a drive of two hours, and a freshwater lakes area. So we went down to Kenora by driving, and as soon as we entered from the province of Manitoba to the province of Ontario, it was so remarkable to hear from my niece's husband, who was driving, that you can notice the difference in roads and highways the moment you enter into the province of Ontario. They are so well built and they are so efficient and safe.

This is the goal of our government and this is part of our plan, Madam Speaker. I see that happening every day in my municipality areas of Mississauga and Brampton. We are providing to all the municipalities across Ontario a gas tax program so that local municipalities can support those local transit priorities. In Mississauga and Brampton, there are huge investments made in Züm, in MiWay, in resurfacing roads and adding routes or adding buses.

This is the issue today in the House: It's about Halton Hills. Our government has provided over \$2.8 million to the town through our gas tax program, which supports local transit priorities. Our government has invested over \$731 million for the projects that have been completed, or those that are under way in Halton region. As my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre said, through the Connecting Links Program, our government has invested almost \$800,000 on key projects on Highway 7 in Halton Hills, and there is more work which we will continue to do.

I'm aware that the town of Halton Hills is undertaking a truck strategy for long-term alternate routes. Because this is a priority for the town of Halton and this is a priority for that community, the Ministry of Transportation continues to be an active participant in the study, and participated in the first stakeholder workshop that was held by the town in May 2017. Prior to that, it's my understanding that the Minister of Transportation also met with the town on this issue.

The point I want to put across is that we will continue to provide this important support that will help connect people to jobs and help make trips from point A to point B safer and more convenient.

I'm going to support this motion, and I ask all the members here to support this motion, because this is an issue which is connecting to communities.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to join in the debate today around the private member's resolution from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. It states, "That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should partner with the town of Halton Hills to develop a long-term transportation strategy for the town, including a review of the need for a Highway 7

Acton bypass, taking into account the need for improved safety, efficiency and economic development opportunities."

This resolution is, first and foremost, an example of an MPP doing exactly what his constituents sent him here to do—to advocate for them and for their communities, to speak up for their interests and to bring forward issues affecting their quality of life and their economic prospects, not just for today but for years to come. That's exactly what this is, and that's exactly what the member is doing. It's an example that all of us should want to follow.

The people of Wellington–Halton Hills are fortunate to have an experienced MPP who knows how to get things done, even in opposition.

That's what he did on another infrastructure project in his riding. For years, he lobbied the government to approve the Morriston bypass on Highway 6. Finally, in March of this year, they approved it. I have no doubt that the member's advocacy went a long way in getting to that stage.

Now we just need to see some shovels in the ground. There are so many reasons we should support this resolution and the project it mentions.

But before I get into those reasons, I want to remind everyone of my resolution which we debated almost two years ago. It stated that the government should guarantee that government-held and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding. It passed with support from all parties.

If this government is looking at which infrastructure projects to support, and if they are doing so with equal and transparent consideration, and if they are doing so based not on politics but rather on the merits, it's obvious that the member for Wellington–Halton Hills has made a very compelling case.

Halton Hills is a fast-growing community. The time for a long-term transportation strategy is now—not years from now, after traffic gets worse.

The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce writes, "As an urban community built on major highways, congestion and safety are becoming critical issues, particularly when these highways intersect such as in the Acton downtown core."

I also represent communities where provincial highways run through them and, in many cases, intersect. We need the province to properly maintain those highways and expand them where necessary, because municipalities cannot be expected to do it on their own. They need the province to be a partner, and they need the province to pony up the cash. They need to see it for what it is: a necessary investment in our long-term prosperity.

The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce makes the same point. Their letter states, "Highway 7 is a major east-west option for trucks and we have seen the traffic ... increasing every year. Our businesses need to have effective access to major markets they are serving to be competitive and cost-efficient, and access to the 401

corridor is critical. Our employees also need to be able to get to work quickly.”

1500

They're right. The resolution is not asking for a luxury. It's not asking for a political monument. It's not pressuring Metrolinx to fast-track a shiny new GO station in Vaughan. No, this resolution is instead calling on the government to recognize an economic necessity. It's calling on the government to bring relief to a corridor serving not just one riding, but the entire region.

Again, I congratulate the member for Wellington–Halton Hills for effectively representing his constituents, and I thank him for advocating for something that will produce economic benefits for years to come.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to this motion today. Looking at the motion, I see the member raising issues we hear right across the province of Ontario: the need for better transportation support for our communities.

As far as I understand it, the mayor of Halton Hills supports this motion. I also support this motion to study the transportation issues in the town of Halton Hills and, of course, in the member's riding. Madam Speaker, as always, I have no doubt that the mayor entirely understands what's happening on the ground in his community. This is always the case in the province of Ontario. Mayors and councillors are on the ground every day and they see the transportation issues every single day. You can see the pictures of congestion and the trucks backed up on Highway 7 that prove that what the mayor is saying is true.

But I believe a study would prove exactly what the local representatives have been saying: that the province needs to address transportation issues. So if it's a study that's required to make this happen, then I'm proud to support him in sending in some experts and producing a report which outlines exactly what those needs are.

Madam Speaker, I can't stress this enough: We're hearing these concerns right across the province of Ontario. In fact, some of these concerns come from my own riding. I know that the town of Halton Hills is advocating for all-day, two-way GO train service to Union Station. In Niagara, we are proud that we're working across party lines and we have secured the GO train coming to Niagara. The GO train running into Niagara Falls by 2023 is a good thing that we're very proud of, but we would be a lot prouder if we could get it sooner. Niagara will be hosting the 2021 Canada Summer Games. There is no reason we can't push this forward and do everything we can to get Niagara Falls a GO train by the time of these important games.

Madam Speaker, when I look at the issues that have been raised by Halton Hills, there are a lot of parallels to what I have just raised. Economic development follows when transportation routes flow smoothly and freely. Right now, if you drive to Toronto, it's almost three hours to drive from Niagara, and almost two hours of that

is sitting in traffic. It's not very good for the environment either. People working in Hamilton sometimes have to wait an hour and a half or two hours just to get to work. If people can drive in a reasonable amount of time, they can live in Niagara in their homes, where they can contribute to our wonderful community, while keeping jobs that provide for their families. So we want to get this province moving quickly. We need to act on public transit options like the ones we're discussing today.

I hope the members opposite are listening. We can work together. We can get a GO train to Niagara a lot quicker than 2023, so let's get it down.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, I'm a passionate supporter of sensible transit strategies. So when a community from Halton Hills is talking about issues with traffic on Highway 7, the need for traffic signals and the need to reduce congestion, let's support that community and study their issues. Let's find the facts and let's make decisions based on sensible policy. That's why I'm proud to support the motion today.

Of course, it should be said that when we were fighting to get GO train service to Niagara in 2014, the Conservatives opposed that. They wouldn't support us.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It didn't just happen once, to the member. It happened in my by-election, where the PCs said no to GO, and then in the general election, the PCs said no again to GO to Niagara.

What I'm saying today is that it's important that we support motions like this across party lines, because what's good in Halton Hills is good for Niagara, is good for Toronto.

My point in raising the 2014 by-election and the 2014 general election—because I had two elections in four months, and I'm pleased that I won both. I just thought I'd say that.

At the end of the day, if we work together, we can fix the transportation crisis that we have in the province of Ontario. We can have economic growth. We can have jobs right across the province of Ontario.

I'm proud to support this motion.

Great job on your motion. It's what you're supposed to do as an elected rep—bring those things to the House and get them fixed.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a pleasure to speak this afternoon. It's great being on House duty on Thursday afternoons because you get to hear about PMBs and motions, things that are really important to local members.

I haven't had the opportunity to have the member from Wellington–Halton Hills be my critic before, but he always strikes me as someone who is very reasonable and a very strong advocate for his community.

We all are doing our job here, and as members from the third party have said and the member from Perth–Wellington has said, this member is doing his job: listening to his community, bringing issues forward.

I can certainly relate. When I was first elected, in late 2011, I had a motion, not unlike this, where I was asking the government to do something and it required some resources. It passed—and I was really happy that it did—with unanimous consent. However, I had to continue to persist and persist and persist. I wrote letters upon letters to different ministers to try to secure a fairly modest amount of funding from the province, joining the municipality, to restore the Frenchman's Bay harbour entrance and make that a safer thing.

Whether it is this Highway 7 Acton bypass proposal or other transit initiatives that members bring forward, I think we should always continue to look at these opportunities.

The member is a very experienced member so he knows how to be—I call it “gently pushy,” in terms of advocating for his community. And he does his homework. That's the other impression I have of this member.

I wish him all—

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's always an honour to stand and speak on behalf of my constituents of Niagara West–Glanbrook, and it's an especially large honour today to be able to speak in support of a motion brought forward by the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

I don't wish to use up all of my time with glowing praise for this member. I think we've heard a fair amount of it already this afternoon. But suffice it to say, whatever praise I could pour on his head would be well deserved, and there could be a lot more where that came from, as I think we've heard from the glowing testimony this afternoon.

Coming into the Legislature myself a little under a year ago—I've been here 10 months now; my, how time flies when you're having fun—I've had the opportunity to observe the member and hear his wisdom on a wide variety of issues and a wide variety of concerns that have come up in front of the Legislature in the short time that I've been here. As a younger member of the Legislature, I very much appreciated being able to sit down with the member for Wellington–Halton Hills on one of my first days here in the Legislature and ask him—as someone who has been here for, I believe, 27 years now, which is a really incredible amount of time to serve his constituents—some questions about being an effective advocate for his constituency, representing the concerns, perspectives and priorities of his constituents in a meaningful and effective way. His words of advice have been greatly appreciated, and I hope to take them to heart more and more as I grow in this role, to be an effective representative myself for my constituents.

The motion that we have before us today is just one of those examples of—the member for Wellington–Halton Hills. Sorry. I keep almost saying his name; I don't mean to. I do mean to refer to him as “the member.” This motion that we have before us today is such an example of someone who is willing to work effectively with not only the government, even though they're from a differ-

ent party, but really to work with all opposition members, and everyone in this House, for issues that matter to his constituents.

1510

Today we have a matter that is mundane, perhaps, yes, but at the same time very, very practical, something that has a huge impact on people's day-to-day life. It's something as simple and as important as infrastructure.

We here in the PC benches are passionate about infrastructure. We care very deeply about ensuring that we're improving access to goods and services through investments in infrastructure—

Mr. Bill Walker: The gas tax.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned very briefly, we have tried here, from this House, to fix the gas tax structure as well. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has brought forward legislation on that important issue many times.

Unfortunately, what we're seeing from the Ontario Liberal government is a tendency towards downgrading the cost of infrastructure investments and upgrades on the municipalities. That's something we don't want to see here in the province of Ontario. We believe the province needs to do as much as it can to ensure that citizens, whether they're in small towns, whether they're in regions like Halton, whether they're in the beautiful peninsula of Niagara—and I wish to thank the member for Niagara Falls for his contributions to debate this afternoon and for bringing up, obviously, the important concerns regarding the GO train in the Niagara region.

I wish to have it on record that the PCs support the GO train going to Niagara. I specifically wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance prior to this year's budget, specifically asking to ensure that we have expedited access to the GO train services in the Niagara peninsula. It's very, very important. So I thank the member for his good work on that issue.

The reality is, I'm sure it's going to be a very, very exciting Niagara games. We're all looking forward to it. Of course, an important part of that is being able to get from point A to point B in a timely fashion.

The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, in this motion, asked that the Ministry of Transportation partner with the town of Halton Hills to develop this long-term transportation strategy for the town.

I don't think I can overemphasize the importance of a long-term transportation strategy for the town. We are seeing modes of transportation shift. I was just reading about Elon Musk and the hyperloop, which could hypothetically bring people between Montreal and Toronto in 37 minutes—quite a remarkable feat of engineering.

But we have to be looking forward in our transportation strategy, not only in the major cities such as Montreal and Toronto, but also in the small towns, in towns such as Halton Hills and in towns such as Vine-land, where I'm from.

I thank the member for his excellent motion, and I look forward to supporting it this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills to wrap up.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank each of the members who participated in the debate for their thoughtful words, including the member for Dufferin–Caledon, who is our deputy leader; the member for Perth–Wellington, who is a trusted voice for his riding; and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, who is distinguished as the youngest member in the province's history. I also want to thank the speakers from the other caucuses.

This was not so much a debate this afternoon as it was a discussion. I'm glad it gave members the chance to bring up some of the other transportation issues and concerns in our respective ridings.

I also want to thank Mayor Rick Bonnette and the council and staff of the town of Halton Hills, including CAO Brent Marshall, for their advocacy on this important issue, as well as Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr and region of Halton council and staff.

In addition, I want to express my appreciation to Kathleen Dills of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, and Sheena Switzer and the Acton BIA for speaking up as well. Also, thanks to Scott Chen, legislative assistant in our Queen's Park office, for his help.

Private members' business has traditionally been a time for more free votes and less party partisanship. While we would all agree that some degree of partisanship is inevitable and has its place, I would suggest that we also need to look for more opportunities to work together, if we are to meet the legitimate expectations of so many of our constituents.

If this resolution is passed today, I will be reminding the minister that he needs to listen to the will of the House and enter into the partnership we're proposing.

Let's remember that the election has not yet been called. It's still months away, and we still have a lot of time to get a lot done for the people of Ontario and, on issues such as this one, to seek to work together, in concert, in the public interest, reaching out towards the promise of the future in the province of Ontario.

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

SIMCOE DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DE SIMCOE

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to proclaim Simcoe Day / Projet de loi 159, Loi proclamant le Jour de Simcoe.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: There are so many stories of well over two centuries ago that were related this past September 17 at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Several events were held to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the opening of

Canada's first Parliament by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe.

On September 12 this fall, on the 226th anniversary on the appointment of John Graves Simcoe as Lieutenant Governor in 1791, I rose in this House to introduce legislation proclaiming the first Monday of each August as Simcoe Day to recognize his contributions to our province and his role in creating the first formal structures of democracy in our country.

Among Canadian holidays, the August long weekend could be said to lack a distinct identity. The May long weekend commemorates Queen Victoria, but in many parts of the province, the day off in August is referred to by the somewhat uninspiring moniker of Civic Holiday.

John Graves Simcoe founded Toronto. That city recognizes Simcoe by naming the first Monday Simcoe Day.

This private members' bill, titled Simcoe Day Act, is intended to bring some awareness of what Simcoe had accomplished. Some might interpret this bill as mandating municipalities to adopt or change their local recognition of what they've named in the past—for example, Ottawa's Colonel By Day or Burlington's Joseph Brant Day—but this legislation does not do that.

The proposed legislation, under my direction and according to legal counsel who drafted the bill, is voluntary. It only proclaims the first Monday in August. I do repeat that those municipalities who already have the first Monday in August recognized will not be affected and those municipalities that wish to opt out down the road can do so, if they so choose.

Just to be sure, I had an opportunity this week to revise the bill to read as such: "The first Monday in August in each year is proclaimed as Simcoe Day, unless a bylaw of a municipality specifies otherwise for the municipality."

If you have been around Burlington for any length of time, you would be familiar with the name Joseph Brant, a Mohawk military and political leader of the late 1700s. Burlington has the first Monday in August in his honour.

Closely related, Emancipation Day, established in Ontario in 2008, falls on August 1. Many will know that John Graves Simcoe banned the importation of slaves into what is now Ontario back in 1793.

During my research, I developed quite an appreciation or an admiration for John Graves Simcoe, his leadership of the Queen's Rangers against George Washington's army and his creation of core institutions that anchor the success of present-day Ontario. He was born February 25, 1752—265 years ago—in England. John Graves Simcoe, although best known as Ontario's first Lieutenant Governor, was also a member of British Parliament. He was a colonial administrator, an army officer—as I mentioned, commander of the Queen's Rangers during the Revolutionary War.

At age 24, Simcoe did go to war in America to fight the revolutionaries. His regiment arrived from Britain in June 1775 to take part in the siege of Boston, two days after the Battle of Bunker Hill. Simcoe assumed com-

mand of the elite Queen's Rangers on October 15, 1777, which was largely composed of Loyalists and deserters from George Washington's army. The Queen's Rangers were named in tribute to Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III. It was a 400-man elite fighting force, first established in the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. They trained in woodcraft, scouting and guerrilla warfare.

Simcoe didn't follow the protocol of the time of strict and rigid manoeuvres. The Rangers wore green uniforms for camouflage, depended on speed and surprise, and were known to defeat forces three times their size.

1520

Simcoe and his Rangers fought alongside Benedict Arnold at Richmond and, in the winter of 1779, spared the life of Washington himself by allowing Washington and several others to escape without firing upon them.

Simcoe was wounded several times during battle. He had his horse shot out from under him. He was held a prisoner of war and then was paroled by Benjamin Franklin.

Simcoe took the time from the war to pursue a young lady named Sarah "Sally" Townsend. On February 14, 1779, he sent her a poem in which he extolled her beauty and his love for her. This is the first recorded Valentine's Day letter in North America.

Following the defeat of the British at Yorktown in 1781, Simcoe spirited the Queen's Rangers colours to England. Today, they're on display in the officers' mess of the Queen's Rangers here at Fort York in Toronto.

There's a television production out there on AMC called *Turn*. So far, the most villainous villain in this series is Captain Simcoe, played by Samuel Roukin. One of AMC's behind-the-scenes promotional videos features the creator, Craig Silverstein, telling us that there's something a little wrong with Simcoe. Roukin describes him as basically a sociopath. Speaker, I consider this an egregious example of betrayal of Simcoe through character assassination—oftentimes the silver screen, in portraying war, does require a villain.

Going back to the Revolutionary War: When it wrapped up, Simcoe returned to England, married Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim and was elected member of Parliament for the borough of St. Mawes in Cornwall. Lady Simcoe left a valuable record of life in Upper Canada through her letters and her diary. She was an accomplished water colourist and a sketch artist. She skillfully chronicled her travels in Upper Canada.

Going back, as we know, on September 12, 1791, Simcoe was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the newly created Upper Canada. With his appointment, he articulated a goal to develop Upper Canada as a model community with aristocratic and conservative principles and to demonstrate the superiority of these ideas in contrast to the republicanism of the United States.

The first session of the first Parliament opened on September 17, 1791, with the presentation of the speech from the throne by Lieutenant Governor Simcoe. The first action of the House of Assembly was to elect

unanimously John McDonell as Speaker. McDonell was a veteran of Colonel John Butler's Rangers and the representative sent from Glengarry. Present-day MPP Jim McDonell has a close connection, and I'm a descendant of John Butler. I carry his middle name.

Just to back up a bit again: The Constitutional Act of June 10, 1791, divided the British colony into two governments: west of the Ottawa River, Upper Canada; the lower reaches of the St. Lawrence became Lower Canada. But we did not see Ontario's first Parliament meet until a year later, at Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake. It sat under the great seal and mace of Upper Canada that were created in 1791.

Those elected to the House of Assembly for the first Parliament were representative of the colony. Most arrived after the American Revolution. They served in the militia, the regular forces and were fiercely loyal to Great Britain and the monarchy. The appointed legislative councillors of Upper Canada, unlike the elected settlers, tended to come from the British Isles and were chosen partly for their success in business or government.

Several important acts were passed: English civil law, trial by jury, the building of a courthouse and a jail in every district, and the introduction of a standard system of weights and measures.

Within days, Ephraim Jones of Grenville had introduced legislation calling for the establishment of trial by jury and the destruction of wolves. Jeremiah French of Stormont wanted better regulation of surveyors, their fees and jurisdiction.

Some things haven't changed: Taxes were proposed on wine and spirits, and anti-smuggling legislation was introduced.

The new Legislature authorized town meetings, laid the structure for municipal government, and, significantly, a year later, in 1793, Simcoe's Legislative Council passed An Act to prevent the further introduction of Slaves and to limit the term of contracts for servitude within this Province—the first such legislation in the British Empire. Settlers in the capital were mostly refugees from the American War of Independence, veterans of Butler's Rangers, and Loyalists with their families. They arrived along with their indentured servants or their slaves.

After 1793, a slave entering Upper Canada would be free, and children born to slaves after 1793 became free at age 25. They were treated equally under the law and the government, their vote was sought in elections, they won lawsuits, their children attended public schools and they were able to buy houses.

It remains unclear exactly where the first sitting of this Legislature was held. Cases are made for Navy Hall, Butler's Barracks, the Masonic Lodge, and a large marquee tent pitched under what is now known as Parliament Oak. Simcoe soon realized that Newark was an unsuitable capital because it was on the border and open to attack. He recommended moving it to a defensible position, and named the location London and renamed the river the Thames. This proposal was rejected, like a

lot of his ideas, by Britain. But Simcoe's second choice, the present site of Toronto, was accepted. The capital was moved there in 1793 and renamed York.

On September 17, 1992—let's fast-forward—130 MPPs went by bus to the place where our first provincial Parliament convened to commemorate the 200th anniversary. Attended by Bob Rae, Lyn McLeod, Mike Harris and Lieutenant Governor Henry Jackman, they planted a tree and they retired for tea at Navy Hall.

To wrap up, John Graves Simcoe lived his life by the family coat of arms, "Non sibi sed patriae," which means, "Not for self but for country." This is the motto of my alma mater, Simcoe district high school, and all of our sports jerseys had that Latin inscription on them. Every kid in that school knows that Latin phrase.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to speak to Bill 159, the Simcoe Day Act. This act would make the first Monday in August of the year Simcoe Day in Ontario. To talk about this act, I thought I should answer two questions: First, why is it important to celebrate Simcoe Day? Secondly, why is John Graves Simcoe's legacy worth recognizing?

To answer the first question, "Why is it important to celebrate Simcoe Day?": To start, I should say that I'm not usually one to use flowery language to describe conservatives; however, I will make an exception for Simcoe. Simcoe had quite an interesting resumé. He was a writer, a British member of Parliament, a soldier and commander, a founder of Toronto and the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, what is today Ontario. His impact on life at the end of the 18th century in Upper Canada makes him a character that is worth learning about.

There was one that stood out in my mind especially. It might be more of a legend than a fact, but I think it's still worth talking about. During the American Revolution, Simcoe fought in the British army. At the time, the British were fighting the patriots of the 13 colonies. These patriots had wanted the 13 colonies to be independent from Britain. During the Battle of Brandywine, Simcoe commanded the 40th battalion. At the end of the battle, Simcoe stopped his soldiers from firing on three fleeing patriots, and it is said that George Washington was one of those three soldiers. This made me think that, along with Ontario, maybe the United States should be celebrating Simcoe Day. After all, he did end up being the Founding Father, and we helped him escape from the Battle of Brandywine.

There are many stories of Simcoe that made me want to learn more about him. I think the celebration of Simcoe Day can do exactly that: It can inspire young students to learn more. That is why it is important to celebrate Simcoe Day.

To the second question, "Why is Simcoe's legacy worth recognizing?": I was also pleased to discover that Simcoe made great contributions to the society of Upper Canada. We wouldn't be in the Legislature today if it

weren't for Simcoe. He decided to make the new capital of Upper Canada York, or, as we say today, Toronto. He also ordered the creation of Yonge Street for the purpose of settling rural parts of southern Ontario.

1530

But beyond these more well-known facts, I also wanted to draw attention to the most important and progressive feat of them all: Simcoe believed in ending slavery. I actually came across a quote of his, before he was the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada—a long time ago: "The principles of the British Constitution do not admit of that slavery which Christianity condemns.... The moment I assume the government of Upper Canada under no modification will I assent to a law that discriminates by dishonest policy between natives of Africa, America or Europe." I was inspired to read those words from Simcoe believing in ending slavery—a man far before his time.

But he did more than speak out against it. He worked hard to change Upper Canada's slavery laws. In Simcoe's time, the Upper Canadian Legislature was made up of two bodies: the elected Legislative Assembly, and the Legislative Council appointed by Simcoe. Many of those in these two councils were slave owners. This made it difficult to push forward legislation that would abolish slavery. However, Simcoe persevered.

Certain events began to shift the public mindset. This allowed Simcoe to be able to convince both legislative bodies to phase out slavery in Upper Canada. The new law made it so that no new slaves could be brought in from outside of Upper Canada and that children born to slaves after the law was passed would become free at the age of 25. It was a compromise, but an effective one.

Simcoe's 1793 Act Against Slavery would become the first slavery-abolishing law passed anywhere in the British Empire. Due to this act, Upper Canada would have no slaves remaining by the time the British Empire fully abolished slavery in 1833. Essentially, Simcoe's position led to the end of slavery in Upper Canada, and it also had larger effects for slaves in the United States. Without Upper Canada's early end to slavery, Toronto would have never become the destination for many taking the Underground Railroad. Simcoe's stance likely saved the lives of many, many African Americans.

Simcoe was taking the progressive path here. He took action a good 30 years before Britain officially ended slavery and a good 60 years before the United States ended slavery. Simcoe should be seen as someone who took the right position before it was agreed upon. In my mind, there is no better reason to celebrate Simcoe than to recognize this important feat.

To conclude, John Graves Simcoe is an interesting character in Ontario history who accomplished many good things. He deserves to be remembered. What better way to remember him than for our province to make the first Monday in August Simcoe Day? I encourage all of you to support Bill 159.

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

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to stand in this House and to speak to the member's motion. Our government is always committed to honouring the historic figures of our province of Ontario. I would like to thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for bringing forward this bill.

As legislators, I think we can all agree that the legacy of Lord Simcoe has important meaning in this chamber. The historic contributions he made remind us all of the exemplary work that early leaders did to found this great province and this great country of ours. When we step into this House, we have to recognize the monumental contributions made by those who have come before us, and today, we are recognizing Lord Simcoe.

John Graves Simcoe was born in Britain and first came to North America with his father, who was a part of the British military expedition in Quebec in 1759. After his father's death, Simcoe returned to Britain to be educated. Upon completing his education, he decided to pursue a military career. He returned to North America because of the American Revolutionary War in 1775 as part of the British forces. In October 1777, he took command of the Queen's Rangers with the rank of major. During this time, he achieved great personal success and a reputation as a tactical theorist.

Finally, he was forced to retreat back to England, but not before becoming a lieutenant colonel. After briefly serving in the British Parliament, he was commissioned on the 12th of September, 1791, to become the first Lieutenant Governor of what was known as Upper Canada.

He first made Newark, which is now known as Niagara-on-the-Lake, the capital of Upper Canada. However, he anticipated the risk of further hostilities between Britain and the United States. Simcoe determined that Newark was a strategically poor choice for a provincial capital, so he moved the provincial capital from Niagara-on-the-Lake, which was known at that time as Newark, to the city of York, which is today known as Toronto—one of the greatest cities on this planet, Madam Speaker.

In the first-ever legislative session, Simcoe managed to pass a bill establishing British civil law, trial by jury, the use of British Winchester standards of measure, and a provision for jails and courthouses in the province of Ontario, or, in those days, Upper Canada.

Most notably, Simcoe passed an act against slavery on July 9, 1793, something that should rightly be celebrated and commemorated. This act not only ended the sale of slaves by Canadians to Americans; it also liberated slaves entering Upper Canada from the US.

Lord Simcoe stood in opposition to the sentiment of the day. He was also incredibly courageous, as he risked retribution not only from Americans but from his own colleagues at the Ontario Legislative Assembly who owned slaves in those days. However, after this legislation was enacted, he took pride in not only his distinction, but all of Upper Canada as well. "Under no modification will I assent to a law that discriminates by dishonest policy between natives of Africa, America or Europe," John Simcoe said. In fact, this legislation came

40 years before the Slavery Abolition Act which would outlaw slavery in most of the British Empire.

We are proud to see, Madam Speaker, that we were on the right side of history and that Canada and Ontario have contributed to the tradition of being progressive and to celebrate its diversity.

The town of Simcoe, of course, is named after him, as is Simcoe county. Schools and streets throughout our province of Ontario are named after him, in all corners of the province. He has a statue right outside at Queen's Park.

It is clear that he had a lasting impact on Ontarians and should rightfully be considered an historic figure. We can learn from him and honour him. That is why I am so pleased, as well as my government and members of the Legislature from the Liberal Party, in supporting this bill.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and support my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk and his private member's Bill 159, An Act to proclaim Simcoe Day. I am, however, going to use the time available to me to give a slightly different approach to this measure today, and that is to talk, as well, about the life of Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, because I think that, as we all know, behind every successful man—but also particularly in the situation that she found herself in in the late part of that century.

1540

While my colleague has a town in his community called Simcoe, I have a region, a lake and several towns with Simcoe connections, so to say that I was keen to speak on this bill would in fact be an understatement.

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to attend the 225th anniversary of the opening of Canada's first Parliament by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe. It was a special opportunity to celebrate our democratic history. John Graves Simcoe played a key role in creating the first formal structures of democracy for our country, and while our capital has moved and town names have changed, his influence is present to this day.

But we cannot recognize the contribution of John Graves Simcoe without raising and recognizing the many contributions of Mrs. Simcoe. Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim was born in the village of Whitchurch in England. Her middle name was a nod to her father, who died just before her birth. Unfortunately, her mother died shortly after her birth. People in my community may find that Gwillim and Whitchurch sound familiar, and I will touch on that shortly.

She went on to marry John Graves Simcoe and had four daughters and one son. That son, Francis, is for whom Castle Frank is named.

Elizabeth painted beautiful watercolours, hundreds of which are carefully preserved by Archives Ontario. These watercolours give us a glimpse of the untouched beauty and early beginnings of Quebec, Niagara, Georgina, York—now Toronto—Kingston, Gananoque and the Magdalen Islands. But more than showing us what they looked like, she left us a diary.

First published in 1934, her diary provides a valuable and colourful illustration of life in the early days in colonial Canada. Her writing style is clear and, while perhaps not exactly how we would write today, it is easy to understand. In May 1792 or 1793, Elizabeth suffered a mosquito bite while in the Niagara area:

“I suffered exquisite pain all the day from a mosquito bite, which the extreme heat increased, and at night my sleeve was obliged to be cut open. I did not see any rattlesnakes, though many ladies are afraid to go to the Table Rock, as it is said there are many of these snakes near it. There are crayfish in small pools of water. Mr. McDonnell said that pounded crayfish applied to the wound was a cure for the bite of rattlesnakes.”

That August, Mr. and Mrs. Simcoe dined with Major and Mrs. Smith, where Elizabeth made some interesting observations about tame raccoons:

“Mrs. Smith has two tame racoons. These resemble a fox, are exceedingly fat animals with bushy tails. When they eat they use their forefeet, as monkeys do. I also saw a flying squirrel, which I did not admire. Its tail was like a rat’s, and the eyes very large. I thought the ground squirrel much prettier. The black squirrel is large and quite black. It is as good to eat as a young rabbit.”

Her observations formed quite a book, with observations of day-to-day life and, of course, the political goings-on. But it is the smaller details about daily life that captured my attention. Elizabeth was an heiress who came from a well-regarded family with deep ties to the nobility throughout the ages, and remember, her father died before she was born and her mother died a few days after she was born.

She was raised as a wealthy heiress who came from a well-regarded family, with deep ties to the nobility. As a child, she was a gifted painter and linguist, speaking English, French, German and Spanish. You can only imagine the opulence that she grew up in, surrounded by governesses and the like, and here she is as an adult, living life in a tent on the frontier, far from the comforts of home. She was more than simply the wife; she was John Simcoe’s partner in their adventure to Canada. We were so lucky to have her paintings and diary to reference when we study and consider life in her time.

She chose the name Scarborough for an area east of York that bears both her husband’s name and hers. The town of Whitchurch, which is today known as Whitchurch-Stouffville, was in my previous riding of Durham–York when I represented that. Gwillimbury is named for her maiden name, Gwillim, and thus North, East and West Gwillimbury are lasting symbols of her impact in the community. In 2007, a statue of Elizabeth was erected in the town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury to commemorate the 150th anniversary. If you are interested in visiting, she can be found in front of the post office in the town of Bradford.

There’s much more that we can say about her, but she certainly made a tremendous contribution to life in Upper Canada.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to this bill today. I want to commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for bringing this bill forward. I know that he is a great admirer of our history, and I’m happy to support his efforts here.

I think it is certainly correct that both John Graves Simcoe and his wife, Lady Simcoe, are both early residents worth remembering and that our future generations should learn about. So much that we recognize about our province came from Simcoe’s first Parliament and was given to future generation through the incredible writings of his wife, things like the creation of municipalities, the implementation of trial by jury and, of course, his landmark bill to abolish the importation of slaves into Canada.

By establishing a day in memory of John Graves Simcoe, we can continue to teach our future generations the stories of who we are and where we came from, a story of lives that intertwine between settlers like Governor Simcoe and the First Nations of the land he came to. It’s a story that would talk about the structures he created to ensure our democracy is alive and vibrant today, but that would also tell of some of his policies which perhaps did not benefit all Canadians or that some may disagree with. Only with true stories and full stories of these figures can we properly commemorate those who built our wonderful province.

As many of you know, John Graves Simcoe’s life intersected with the history of a town in my riding called Niagara-on-the-Lake. During his time, it was called Newark, and at that time, it was the capital of Upper Canada.

There’s a reason I know this history and a reason why I can stand so proudly in this House today and recite the history to you: It’s because of the residents of my community. The residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake strive to keep their history not only in memory but alive and vibrant. The amount of time and dedication they give back to our community to ensure our future generations know about our past is truly incredible.

I can think of no better example of that than the 225th anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislature that took place in Niagara-on-the-Lake on September 17. For over nine months, dedicated residents from the town came together to work tirelessly so we could celebrate the first sitting of this Legislature in 1792. It’s why we should all be honoured to be here every day that people send us here upon being elected. We are not entirely certain of the exact location of that gathering, although Navy Hall, the Commons and the area known as Parliament Oak are likely suspects. But we do know that what the original representatives did set in motion were our democratic traditions that carry on to this day.

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The committee worked long hours and lobbied MPPs from every party in this House to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake and be part of that celebration. Madam Speaker, I’m proud to say it worked. It was a day where party affiliation didn’t matter. It was a day where we put aside

our disagreements and came together to support the residents, and to learn a little bit of our history. I'm proud to say that my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk was not only there for that, but he actually came bearing arms—and you know what I'm talking about. The LG came. The Speaker of the House came. To all the members in this House who came: From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you.

But my biggest thank you goes to members from my community. I want to thank Dr. Richard Merritt, Patti Knipe, Dr. Wes Turner and Terry Bolton. Those four played an instrumental role in getting our Niagara Gazette off the ground, which was the historic paper we circulated to the guests and to the whole town. It was absolutely beautiful and truly unique.

I want to thank Barbara Worthy, who is the playwright who wrote our plays for the Canada 150 events. I know the members who came absolutely loved the one we saw. It was incredible. Actually, one guy had a moustache.

Laughter.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, he did.

I want to thank Bill Cowie, Rick Malone, Claire Cameron, and so many other volunteers on the 225 committee.

I also want to thank Peter Martin and Scott Finley from Fort George, who were there. They did an incredible job.

I also want to thank Lord Mayor Pat Darte—Lord Mayor Pat Darte; doesn't that sound kind of official?—and his council for ensuring that these residents have the ability and the supports they needed to make this incredible event happen.

Perhaps most of all, I want to thank Cheryl Morris. Without her around-the-clock work, none of these events would have been possible or come together as perfectly as they did.

Again, thank you to everyone who helped to plan these events and everyone who came.

Madam Speaker, I can't say enough. I'm absolutely honoured and blessed to represent the constituents that I do. I know that my riding was actually already celebrating Simcoe Day every year down at Mackenzie Printery in Queenston. It's a day when people come from all over Niagara to learn a little bit about their forefathers and foremothers of this country.

I want to close: It's where we come to learn about where we come from and where we are going as a community, as province and as a people. I believe this bill will take a step to bring that experience to the entire province.

As the member supported me when my community organized to commemorate our history, I stand with him and his community as they try to do the same.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to speak to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's Bill 159, An Act to proclaim Simcoe Day.

I'm particularly pleased because, as I sit in my constituency office at my grandfather's—Major General

Arthur Potts's—desk, and I look across to the wall I face, there is a portrait of Mr. Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and next to him is a portrait of Tecumseh—two great heroes, two great historical figures in the province of Ontario, who actually helped give us the security that we now have against the American invaders of that time. I'm delighted because I am a supporter and I will support the bill.

I was particularly pleased with the line of debate that the member from York–Simcoe was going down on, because I too wanted to talk about Lady Simcoe and what an extraordinary figure she was. All these great paintings, these historical representations we have of our indigenous, First Nations people of Ontario, come from so many of her watercolours at the time. We have many here in the Legislature. They're fantastic. I kind of thought where she was going was maybe to propose an amendment to make it Lady Simcoe Day. We don't have enough women who are being recognized on official days like that, and I thought that would have been a very interesting way to go. We could honour John Graves Simcoe with Lady Simcoe having this day of honour. That's not the case, but what we have before us is this opportunity.

I was also pleased to see in the member's bill an exemption for municipalities that have a bylaw on the books that name it something differently, because I grew up in the city of Toronto, where the bylaw says that it is Simcoe Day. So I grew up experiencing Simcoe Day on a regular basis. That's what we called the Civic Holiday; it was Simcoe Day. I think that started in 1969, and it was a few years later that a motion in front of AMO to have Simcoe Day applied to all municipalities across the province of Ontario failed. But in Toronto, it continues.

What's important about that is that AMO was recognizing that many, many municipalities took the Civic Holiday and made it their own. That's why it's important in the bill here that we have this exemption for municipalities, and I appreciate the foresight of the member putting that forward.

You think about those other days that municipalities have taken—Colonel By Day in Ottawa, for instance. They named expressways after him. It's extraordinary—Colonel By Day. In Hamilton, it's George Hamilton Day. In Burlington, it's Joseph Brant Day; Founders Day in Brantford; McLaughlin Day in Ottawa—I think he was a president of General Motors Canada at one point; Alexander Mackenzie Day in Sarnia; James Cockburn Day in Cobourg; Peter Robinson Day in Peterborough; and John Galt Day in Guelph.

We have a rich history in municipalities. The fact that we have that exemption is one of those recognitions as a provincial Legislature—we recognize the richness of our municipalities and we give them that kind of flexibility.

What I also wanted to address at this point is, as I said earlier, I stare at two portraits: Simcoe and Tecumseh, two great heroes. And I ask the question: whether we should be naming another day and having another monument to a European white male.

In the days of reconciliation, of all the things we've come to believe that we need to do to respect our indigenous First Nations in the province of Ontario, what if it were actually called Tecumseh Day, in recognition of the work that Tecumseh did—side by side with Simcoe—to defend us against the Americans? Now, Tecumseh wasn't born in Canada, but then neither was Simcoe. He was a Brit. Tecumseh was born in the United States of America, where he made his history before joining forces and then coming up here and defeating the Americans on Canadian soil.

It wouldn't be fair in the spirit of reconciliation if we didn't recognize some of Simcoe's failings with respect to his treatment of indigenous people in the province of Ontario. He was a great believer in agriculture—a great believer in the concept of giving people land to make them loyal to the place that he was governing. So Simcoe gave large tracts of land to various people in the province—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Leave me a minute.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I've only got a minute?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Leave me a minute.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I didn't know—are you speaking? I had no idea you were speaking. No one told me. Okay.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You just burned a minute.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I've burned a minute just talking about it.

Simcoe was not providing respect to the indigenous people because he was giving away this land, which wasn't his to give.

On that note, Speaker, I'll leave a minute for the Minister of Agriculture to talk about agriculture.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm honoured today to stand and talk for my residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and to speak to Bill 159, An Act to proclaim Simcoe Day, brought forward by my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, a student of history, particularly the history of Ontario.

Our country has much to be proud of and is often cited as the number one country in the world to live. Let's just think about that for a second: We're living where most people in the world would like to live. This did not happen by accident. It's the result of generations of hard-working men and women who came together to develop the Canada that we see today.

John Graves Simcoe was one of those who truly left a mark on this country. He left the relative comfort of England to travel to a hostile land across the ocean, leaving friends and family behind, to fight for his country—an example followed by many generations of Canadians up till today.

His leadership qualities led him to quickly rise through the ranks to command the Queen's Rangers. After the American Revolution, he moved back to England and was elected as a member of Parliament.

His accomplishments were acknowledged and he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the newly created Upper Canada on September 12, 1791. He quickly set

about to create a region that was a model community and one that became the basis of this great country of ours.

Under an act of British Parliament he saw that elections were held in August 1792 to elect a 16-member House of the Assembly. As Lieutenant Governor, John Simcoe called the assembly together for the first meeting of the new Legislature on Monday, September 17, 1792.

Under his agenda, he ensured that several important acts were passed by the first Parliament, including the establishment of English civil law and trial by jury, the abolition of slavery, the division of the province into 17 counties and districts and the building of a courthouse and jail in each one of them; and the introduction of a standard system of weights and measures.

1600

Speaker, defence of our young country was top of mind for the Lieutenant Governor. Upper Canada was a harsh environment, sparsely populated by our First Nations and by newly settled pioneers who barely had time to establish their farms to provide food and homes to provide shelter. The land was harsh, with mountains, swamps and forests, and the climate was severe. And our neighbour to the south had almost a 200-year head start and were clearly a threat. As the leader of this new Upper Canada, he had to work with peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, faiths and origins—many who had fought against each other not too long before that. He brought these peoples together, putting their differences aside for a common good: the building and the defence of a new home, a new country. He quickly forged this rough, young nation into a force to be reckoned with and, as history would show, one ready to withstand invasion from what many assumed would be far superior armed forces. He identified that the capital, in what is today's Niagara-on-the-Lake, was open to attack and he was instrumental in moving it to York, known today as the city of Toronto.

Speaker, we have much to be thankful for today, and we must remember the courageous men and women of yesterday who can stand side by side and take credit for the building of this great country and for the mark it has left on our modern world.

John Graves Simcoe was one of those great Canadians. We can safely say that he lived his life by the inscription on the family coat of arms: "Not for self, but for country."

To paraphrase former Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper, our country was built on the backs of giants, and John Simcoe was truly a giant of our history.

We have much to be thankful for and many people to remember.

I support this bill by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk to mark the first Monday in August as Simcoe Day.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: For me to make a major speech in 58 seconds is somewhat challenging, but I just want to get on the record that this is a really neat initiative by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

What we've had for so many years in the province of Ontario—we had this kind of bland day for the holiday, the first Monday in August, the Civic Holiday. When I would talk to people on George Street in Peterborough, if you said “Civic Holiday,” their eyes would glaze over. Then we went to Simcoe Day. By having it as Simcoe Day, people started to do research on what Lord Simcoe was all about. So by making it uniform across the province of Ontario—I salute the member for bringing it forward today.

More importantly, in many ways, when Simcoe passed the act against slavery—

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I also have very little time to speak to this, but I did want to get on the record that I was fascinated by the contributions to the debate on this legislation today, as brought forward by the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who is absolutely an astute student of history.

It's very important, especially for young people, to learn more about those who have come before us, those who have put in place the institutions and those who set the framework, the groundwork for what Ontario is today. I think John Graves Simcoe is one of those heroes of history we should be proud to celebrate in this House and across our province.

I look forward to supporting the legislation in a vote in a few minutes so that we can respect municipalities but still allow for this great figure to be celebrated in Canadian history.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk to wrap up.

Mr. Toby Barrett: So much has been written and spoken about, and we've realized today so much that we don't—things that I didn't know.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek makes a compelling case: If Simcoe's men had killed George Washington, that would have changed the course of North American history and perhaps world history.

The Minister of Research, Innovation and Science was reinforcing the fact that the government of Ontario always honours its historical figures of this stature.

My seatmate described various place names in her riding, including her riding name, York–Simcoe, and gave us a good description of the writings of Lady Simcoe. I know she described the raccoon as “Canadian monkey.”

The member for Niagara Falls has the good fortune to represent the people that appreciate that history, and on that day, they obviously allowed open-carry. I was able to walk around all day with a family Brown Bess tower musket with a bayonet and was not challenged by anyone.

The member opposite spoke well and, again, represents another riding with the influence of Simcoe: Beaches–East York, the name he gave to the original Toronto, and then it went back to “Toronto.”

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—his ancestry precedes him. I'll leave this House

with a question: How many McDonells have been elected here in the last 225 years?

The Minister of Agriculture—I would like to know where he was going with part two, but he made the case for replacing the bland word “Civic” with the word “Simcoe.”

Of course, the member for Niagara Falls—or, I'm sorry—

Interjection: Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —Niagara West–Glanbrook. Again, you are in Simcoe country down that way and are carrying on that heritage.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time allocated for private members' public business has expired.

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE ET SEXUELLE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will first deal with ballot item number 70, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to domestic and sexual violence.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it.

We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 63.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

SIMCOE DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DE SIMCOE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to proclaim Simcoe 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 about the committee.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I would request further discussion before the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

Since we have a vote, this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1608 to 1613.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, please take your seats.

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE ET SEXUELLE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Horwath moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to domestic and sexual violence.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	French, Jennifer K.	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Hoskins, Eric	Oosterhoff, Sam
Coe, Lorne	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Colle, Mike	Jones, Sylvia	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Qaadri, Shafiq
Dhillon, Vic	Malhi, Harinder	Sattler, Peggy
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.	
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 43; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the leader of the third party to identify the committee.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like the bill sent to the social policy committee, please, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that the following document was

tabled: order in council 1971/2017, dated September 27, 2017, appointing the Honourable J. David Wake as the temporary Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario, commencing September 26, 2017.

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 Ms. MacLeod assumes ballot item number 75 on the list drawn on September 8, 2016, and Mr. Romano assumes ballot item number 64 on the list drawn on August 14, 2017.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale et d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Which committee is this particular bill going to?

Hon. Laura Albanese: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

CUTTING UNNECESSARY RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES INUTILES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les

formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017. The Whitby Chamber of Commerce often tells me that for a small business to succeed, it's crucial to have a legislative framework that focuses on reducing, not adding to, the regulatory burden, allowing businesses to focus on what they do best: innovate, expand and, most importantly, create jobs.

Businesses in the Whitby–Oshawa riding tell me that red tape shifts their focus away from growing their business. Spending time, energy and resources filling out excessive paperwork or jumping through bureaucratic provincial hoops impedes small and large businesses alike in that area.

The regulatory burden can be especially difficult for small businesses to adhere to, given that they have much smaller staffs compared to larger businesses, but they're still bound by the same regulatory framework. This means that small business owners must turn to consultants for help. In turn, this makes the costs of running their businesses go up and profit margins diminish.

1620

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business cites excessive red tape as the second-highest priority of their members, after taxes. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has estimated that the cost of regulation in Ontario has grown from \$12.8 billion to \$4.7 billion between 2005 and 2014.

Speaker, the former president and chief executive officer of TD Bank Group, Ed Clark, said:

"Ontario has 380,000 regulatory requirements for business, almost double the number in some provinces.

"While the number is staggering, the structure and complexity of compliance is even more problematic. It makes us less competitive. We are seen by foreigners—and even ourselves—as a slow place to do business."

Ontario needs to be seen as a place which has the processes for businesses to succeed and create jobs, and one that encourages investment, both domestic and foreign. Measures such as less time filling out paperwork will make it easier for Ontario businesses to focus on what they do best: growing their business and creating jobs, and in turn growing Ontario's economy.

Let's turn for a moment, Speaker, to the report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which focused on red tape. The report criticized the regulatory regime in Ontario and the fragile consultative process with businesses in the development of provincial regulations. I'd like to quote the report:

"Business is too often viewed primarily as the object of regulation, rather than an equal partner in the creation of innovative, productivity-enhancing systems and procedures for achieving improved ... outcomes."

On stakeholder consultations, the government should move "towards a more productive and reciprocal rela-

tionship with business that will allow it to reconcile the act of regulation with the principle of economic sustainability."

Finally, Speaker, the chamber's report made eight recommendations to the government, and this afternoon I'd like to highlight in particular two of those recommendations, as they should have been included in Bill 154:

"Require that all significant regulatory measures, including rule-making by delegated authorities, undergo a mandatory integrated impact assessment before they are implemented. This process should take place with oversight from an independent, expert body.

"Legislate a five-year automatic review process with clear evaluation techniques and criteria to systematically review new and existing laws and regulations."

What's clear, Speaker, is that red tape has continued to be an impediment to the growth of businesses and, by extension, the economy of Ontario. Meanwhile, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has a track record of reducing red tape in Ontario. A Red Tape Commission was created by the Progressive Conservatives under Premier Mike Harris. Its primary purpose was to reduce red tape for small businesses and individuals, and to promote greater business planning through the public sector.

I'd like to quote the former member from Lincoln and the co-chair of the commission, Frank Sheehan. Mr. Sheehan had this to say on December 11, 1997, in this place:

"Prior to the election in 1995, our government identified red tape as probably one of the most significant impediments to investment and job creation outside of the \$100-billion debt we're currently taking care of..."

"The Red Tape Review Commission was struck by the Premier ... and gave us a one-year mandate. In that one-year mandate, we consulted with externals like the ministries, the cabinet and a range of stakeholders from around the community, whether they be business or institutions."

I should note, Speaker, that in December 2003, only months after being sworn in, the newly elected Liberal government dismantled the Red Tape Commission. Ontario businesses have reaped the benefits of that action for the last 14 years.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business held their annual Red Tape Awareness Week. During that week, they released their red tape report cards for each province as well as the federal government, grading them on three important categories: political leadership, comprehensive public measures, and a clear cap on government rules.

Ontario was ranked sixth in Canada, behind British Columbia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the federal government. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that the province was lacking on two of the metrics used in their evaluations.

On comprehensive public measures, they said, "The province used the regulatory requirements approach

several years ago as a comprehensive measure, but has not kept it up to date. The province is not currently tracking any measures of the overall regulatory burden.”

Speaker, with regard to a clear cap on government rules, “the province is not tracking the cost of additional rules coming into the system so it is impossible to say whether the total cost of complying with rules in Ontario has gone up or down.”

Finally, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business included next steps for Ontario, should the current Liberal government wish to take the issue of red tape seriously and improve their report card. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommended that the government should consider using its approach to calculating red tape savings to determine the overall cost of its rules and put in place a hard cap on the cost of the rules in the system. “In the meantime, it should be careful not to add additional burdensome rules through initiatives like the Changing Workplaces Review” that would undermine its progress on burden reduction in other areas.

Ontario currently has 380,000 rules and regulations. The administrative burden that this places on businesses is massive, so burden reduction is desperately needed. Many of the proposed measures in this bill are long overdue, and this raises the question of why this bill is coming forward now, in 2017. Why is the Liberal government suddenly interested in reducing red tape on Ontario businesses when the reduction of red tape has repeatedly been an issue for Ontario businesses for 14 years?

Well, I would suggest that this is related, of course, to the upcoming election. Under this government, individuals and businesses alike continue to work harder, pay more and get less. Life is truly harder under the Liberals. However, this government has spent years developing and implementing an oppressive and chaotic regulatory environment which has discouraged investment, curbed innovation and siphoned billions of dollars out of the Ontario economy.

The proposed measures in this bill are too little, too late. Ontario needs much more decisive action on the fundamentals that allow an economy to grow and create a competitive business environment. There’s no enforcement mechanism in this bill, and the efficacy of the measures relies entirely on the assumption that the ministers and their ministries will take the initiative to reduce the administrative burden they are responsible for.

This simply is not concrete enough. Ontario businesses are struggling with skyrocketing energy costs, sudden and reckless increases to the minimum wage, and the impacts of the flawed cap-and-trade scheme.

In closing, businesses across the province deserve much more than a housekeeping bill that proposes mostly administrative measures without any significant benefit to private individuals or businesses here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m looking forward to speaking on this bill as well, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. I think on the premise of the title of the bill, we can all agree that we want to make sure that if there are unnecessary regulations or things that people have to adhere to, they don’t make life harder for businesses. Absolutely, we have to review them. There’s a lot of them, because the bill is pretty thick.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa made some good points on the bill, but definitely when it gets to committee, I think that’s where we’re going to hear a lot of the details through these regulations, because when you read some of them over, it’s an overview and it tells you to go back to a subsection of this act. So it’s certainly going to be challenging to go through each of the proposals in here and make sure that when we’re cutting red tape, we’re not offsetting another issue that’s going to cause more red tape. It’s important that we do that.

1630

When I’m going to have my time to debate, Speaker, I’m going to talk about the importance of small businesses in communities and allowing them to thrive and run—to be successful. When you have a lot of red tape, you spend most of your time going through all the rules to get to the end goal, which doesn’t make sense. Businesses want to be in the business of doing what they’re supposed to be doing and not looking through a maze of red tape to get to what they want.

It should be something that we can accomplish together, I think, as a Legislature so that we have a friendlier process for businesses, but in the meantime, Speaker, when it goes to committee, that’s when the real work is going to be done. We’ll be making sure that when those regulations are changed or removed, it’s not an offset to something else, ballooning into further red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to stand in this House on Thursday afternoon and debate this bill reducing unnecessary red tape. I just wanted to comment on something that the member across the way there, the PC member from Whitby–Oshawa, commented on: “The government just woke up now and decided we needed to cut red tape.” Well, I’m not sure if the member was here last year or not—I don’t remember exactly when he was elected to this chamber—but this is actually the second of our annual bills that are addressing red tape. We just didn’t wake up now and smell the coffee. We’ve been doing just that for the last couple of years.

This is actually an annual bill, so this is not the last time you’re going to see it. We’re going to continue bringing this bill forward on an annual basis so that we continue to look, to find ways how to cut the red tape, most especially for those small businesses that the member from London–Fanshawe spoke of.

As I said in the House yesterday, it’s the small businesses that are really the backbone of our economy, and it’s often the small businesses that get entangled in so

much red tape, and how important it is for us as a government to make sure that they're going to continue to do business here in Ontario, that they're going to continue to thrive in the province of Ontario and create the jobs here in Ontario—so ensuring that, through this piece of legislation, we're able to address those small businesses.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa spoke about Ontario and perhaps its lack of being competitive. I just want to remind the member that we are a leader in GDP growth, outpacing Canada and all other G7 countries. We are consistently seeing Ontario's economic growth signalling a strong, competitive business climate. Mr. Speaker, when I get to go out and speak at events on behalf of Minister Duguid and I get to meet all these up-and-coming companies, let me tell you, Ontario is where they want to be, because it's in Ontario that it's happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): For further questions and comments, I now turn to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 154, Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. I've already spoken to this, but it's a pleasure to provide some comments. One of the things that we continually hear, and in my six years I've continually heard from businesses, is about the continuing barrage of red tape from this government, asking them to do more and more reporting, more and more administration and bureaucracy—and less time that they actually get to spend with their customers, who obviously are who they are there to serve. So it's interesting.

The member from Davenport just said this is an annual bill they bring back. I'd like to see them put a hard target: How many actual regulations are you truly going to cut, and will you report on how many you cut last year, according to your target? Probably, I trust, you didn't even set a target, because what I find with a lot of this government is that there's lots of talk, lots of good headlines, but when you actually get down to accountability and asking for the results, we don't see that.

The member from Davenport just spoke about all the wonderful growth. I think she should actually come out to some of our communities and hear how people are truly struggling with the excessive hydro costs that they're burdened by. Now they're going to have more and more red tape, which they're being buried under, and now we're talking about, again, the minimum wage going up.

I just received a note today from the Meaford Chamber of Commerce. They had a round table, and they're very, very concerned, not, again, about the actual amount of the minimum wage that needs to be there—everyone, I think, on this side would suggest that that is a reality—but the growth. They are suggesting that to have a 32% increase in an 18- or 15-month period is just not bearable by many small businesses, and particularly those that have not been forewarned that it's coming. They want to slow that down. They are suggesting that it should be over five years.

I think if you were to take some of the red tape away, you are actually going to work to permanently cut hydro rates, because let's not forget that this fair relief is going to be two years—coincidentally, there's an election in there—and then they're going to drastically rise again.

At the end of the day, I want to see hard targets. I want to see them truly say, "We'll cut this many red tape regulations out." Then we might actually believe, trustworthily-wise, that they're going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

For further questions and comments, I now turn to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to speak in this House. I don't think our TV audience is going to be very big on a Thursday afternoon. So we get to talk about what we were talking about today—what are we talking about today?

Interjection: Cutting red tape.

Mr. John Vanthof: Cutting unnecessary red tape, which is a very interesting topic, because this House and all the ministries that take their direction from this House—that's kind of our job. Creating red tape is kind of our job, because it's our job to make regulations. The trick is—because regulations aren't all bad; I think everybody will agree with that—to make regulations that actually serve people and that actually work.

What often happens is that a problem arises and, "Oh, we'll create a regulation." What really drives me crazy, especially in my farming career, is when I see someone stand up in a position of power and say, "We have the strongest regulations on whatever issue we're talking about in the world." I always want to be able to ask, "But do they work? Do they serve the purpose they actually were created to do?" Often, you get kind of a blank answer, because you're out to solve an individual problem and you don't look at what the overall problem is.

It's like the new federal income tax changes. Should they look at making sure everybody pays their fair share of income tax, including private corporations? Of course. But you have to look at what the overall regulations are going to do long-term and actually work together with all the people to make sure that they do have their intended consequence, but also, that they don't have huge unintended consequences. That's what we always have to worry about that when we create regulations, which is our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

For final response, I return to the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The broad proposals in the bill are generally in the right direction. But as I indicated in my comments, there's no enforcement mechanism. Clearly, the ministry can't say what the uptake of these policies will be.

Last night, I was at an awards gala for the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce with my colleague the MPP from Oshawa. Members of that particular chamber

were saying that the amendments to the existing statutes are mostly administrative and do not offer any significant benefit to businesses, in their estimation, within the city of Oshawa and the region of Durham.

Whilst this bill is a small nod in the right direction, I believe we need more decisive action on the economic fundamentals that underpin our economy here in Ontario to create the type of competitive business environment that members of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce desire, that the members of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce desire and, I would submit to you, Speaker, that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has stipulated in their red tape report. This bill before us is more to benefit government than private individuals and businesses.

I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Davenport, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. All of their comments contributed significantly to our discussion today on Bill 154.

We need more dialogue on this particular legislation. We need more clarity on the regulations going forward to have a very clear understanding of the effect on Ontario businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the honourable member from Whitby–Oshawa.

I now turn for further debate to the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege and a pleasure to stand in this place and to speak about legislation on behalf of those in Ontario and those incredible citizens of Parkdale–High Park—the best riding in Ontario, might I say.

We're talking about a bill—and I want to start with the title of the bill, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. I would offer up this thought about the title. First of all, is there necessary red tape? “Red tape” is a derogatory term; I think we can all agree on that. It's a nuanced name, and I would suggest that the reason the government even uses this name—let's take the “unnecessary” out of it—is because they've been reading the polls and the polls suggest that we are going to be looking at, if things don't change, a Progressive Conservative government in 2018. The government, of course, is concerned about that because the government would like to stay the government. So you've got a very Conservative-sounding bill coming from a Liberal government.

1640

I want to just riff a little bit on the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—I want to go down that track. There is an incredible amount of importance to having regulations, particularly regulations around business. We can all remember the Nestlé fiasco. We can think of a number of multinationals and large companies that routinely take our environment for granted, routinely use our resources without paying enough for them.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa spoke about the CFIB. With all due respect to them, if you really want to hear the voice of small business, not big business, go to your BIAs, or go down Main Street and actually talk to

people in your community. What you will find is, the concerns of the people in those small shops and in those small businesses are not—yes, of course, everybody is concerned about taxation. But my small business folk, for example, back when we were fighting for a \$10 minimum wage—which, by the way, gave a 28% raise to a million Ontarians, and the sky did not fall when that happened. It wasn't small business that resisted that change, because they knew they had to pay more than the minimum wage to attract people since they didn't have the benefit packages that large business has to offer. The minimum wage is a big business problem. Regulation is a big business problem, for the most part.

But yes, there is absolutely a necessity to look over how we do things, how we enforce—and enforcement is key here, because a lot of the regulation we already have in place is not enforced well. Witness the Ministry of Labour, where only one in 100 companies ever gets a visit from the Ministry of Labour. How can you possibly enforce labour laws if that's the case?

I want to focus on one particular aspect which I see as red tape and that's in the performance of this government. In question period today, I raised a dramatic instance of human rights being overlooked and not being upheld, and that is of a non-binary person, Joshua Armstrong, who has now had to file a human rights complaint against the government for not providing the ability for them to get a birth certificate. This is surely a human right. We all have the human right, we hope, to have necessary identification—but not Joshua. Joshua can't get a birth certificate. How is Joshua supposed to get a passport without a birth certificate? How is Joshua supposed to exist without necessary identification? It took five tablings of Toby's Law, it took a period of five to six years to get gender identity and gender expression, trans rights, into the Ontario Human Rights Code. Does it really take six years to get a form amended? I don't understand that. I've spoken to the minister, and I still don't get it. Six years to get a form amended to comply with our laws—with our laws. Talk about red tape.

“Human rights” actually means something. It has ramifications. It means you should be able to get equal health care, equal identification, equal employment, equal housing. So when we add to the Ontario Human Rights Code, that means every ministry, just about, will be affected and will have to look at the way they do business. That clearly did not happen. It has led us to this juncture where, sometime soon, maybe, Joshua might find a birth certificate in the mail. Unacceptable, Mr. Speaker—absolutely unacceptable.

So there's an example of inefficiency—and, actually, an abridgement of human rights—and red tape, if you will, because whatever the process is to get the birth certificate, that's a lot of bureaucracy and that's a lot of meetings to produce one amendment to a form. Really? So I suggest that the government should look at the way they do business if that's the case there.

Again, I listened with great interest to the Attorney General talking about various aspects of this bill. Yes,

absolutely, there are aspects of this bill that I'm sure are necessary. But let's clean our own house, put our own house in order before we look outside. I've given you an example of how to do just that.

Then, to get back again—because I hear, always from the right, both literally and figuratively, from the Conservative Party, about the needs of small business. The reality is, small business has been suffering in this country and south of the border since the 1970s. Increasingly, big business is swallowing up small business. You'll hear on Main Street that one of their major problems is not government; it's Bay Street. It's the big multinationals that they have to compete with. It's the Walmarts that take away the business from the small hardware store on the corner. That's the problem for small business. The question is, is this bill going to help that? I don't think so. So I don't think it's really about the needs of small business, which has been on the decline and up against it since the 1970s. We've had more amalgamations of business and more and more encroachment on Main Street by the mall since the 1970s.

Again, all politicians say it over and over again—if anybody watches the John Oliver show, I'm a big fan of the John Oliver show. They did an excellent segment on this very issue, talking about how we all talk about how we love small business, but, in fact, the reality of our world is that small business is hurting and dying, and big business is growing and taking over, and also putting the very jurisdictions of our governments at risk. Because when you've got multinationals who can pick up and go, you've got a real problem with how you regulate them. So regulation is not the problem; the problem is ditching any regulation by picking up and going to another community or another country, where perhaps they don't have the labour laws we do and perhaps they don't have the minimum wage we do. That's a problem.

I don't see regulation as a bad thing. It's the job of government. If government didn't bring in laws and regulations, we wouldn't have a job. I don't see taxes as a bad thing either, because if we didn't pay taxes, we wouldn't have hospitals, roads and schools. So those aren't the problem here, and they're not what's going to help our small businesses. To effect red tape changes—yes, it might streamline their days, make a little bit of work at the end of the day, but their real problem is how to keep and retain their customers in a world where business is being consolidated at a rapid rate.

I know somebody is going to be talking about IT—you know, start-ups, which we're great at and we're doing better at in the city of Toronto, and we're pleased about that. But mark my words: Those small start-ups—payday will come when they're gobbled up by the big guys from Silicon Valley, if we don't watch it.

So we have a lot of work to do, absolutely, to protect small business, which creates 85% of our new jobs, but this isn't going to do it. The Conservatives' stance and their approach is not going to do it. What's going to do it is doing the real work of government, which is standing up for the little guy—standing up for the little guy

against the big guy. That should be the role of the reform movement in government, and we desperately need reform.

I'm going to leave it at that. I look forward to the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the honourable member from Parkdale–High Park.

I now recognize, for further questions and comments, the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a great opportunity for me to follow the member from High Park.

Interjection: Parkdale.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to say a few words about—or Parkdale–High Park; sorry. I should know by now. She's been here for a while.

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This is a member who I recall, when she came here in a by-election many years ago—I don't even remember how many years that was.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Eleven.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Eleven years ago—I hadn't been here long myself; I had probably two or three years by then. We had not met before then.

I remember being struck by just how passionate she was 11 years ago when she came into this place. I want to say today that this is a member who never lost that passion, never lost that love of public service, never lost that interest in what we do here, nor did she lose that ability to give thoughtful advice and intervention in these debates. There's a lot of to-and-fro happening in this place, and we can all be part of it. The member from Parkdale–High Park was very good at that when she had to be, as I probably was from my side, but I've always respected her views on these things.

Listening to what she said—and I did listen—there was a lot of good advice in there. Something she said that strikes me, and something I think we need to be very conscious of on all sides of the House in our economic development strategy, is the challenge of ensuring that our small companies don't get gobbled, as she said, because they are some of the best innovative companies in the world today.

While it's nice to have the Googles of the world coming here and maybe even the Amazons of the world looking here for potential expansion, while there are some good aspects to that, one of the challenges is that they can take up that whole ecosystem space, which makes it more difficult for the smaller companies to grow from start-ups to scale-ups, and scale-ups to global companies. That is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Growth. I now turn, for further questions and comments, to the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to be able to follow up on the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, who followed up on the member for High Park today. I would have to echo his sentiment that I'm sure we will all miss your passion in this place in the new

year, when we don't have the pleasure of hearing you speak to bills such as this bill, which I'm sure you're very passionate about, because the importance of cutting red tape and not conflating the term "regulation" with "red tape" is an important one.

She raised a very important matter that I think we need to talk about, which is small business. We all talk about small business a lot in this place, but one of the things that I've been disappointed in, quite frankly, as we've been having this discussion here in the Ontario Legislature surrounding small business—and the Minister of Economic Development can speak all he wants about his desire to improve the ecosystem for small business—is the reality of the federal tax changes that are coming through from the federal Liberal government—your federal counterparts. These are tax changes I'm hearing about from a lot of my small business owners, a lot of hard-working professionals who are very concerned about these tax changes. From the government benches, we've heard nothing about what their plan is to address these concerns with the federal government. I'm hoping that the Minister of Economic Development will recognize some of these concerns.

The member for Parkdale–High Park has spoken about the importance of the small businesses in her community. I want to make sure that, as in mine, those small businesses and those people who are entrepreneurs who take that incredible amount of risk to go out there and start a small business are not being penalized because of that opportunity, because of wishing to improve the lives of themselves and their families.

I hope that the government will not simply cut red tape in this case, but also take substantial action to address the federal government and ask them to take steps to stop these ridiculous—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the honourable member from Niagara West–Glanbrook. Now I turn, for further questions and comments, to the MPP for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to be in the House and follow the member from Parkdale–High Park in her debate and comment, because she truly is, I think all of us would agree—maybe I'm not speaking for everyone, but certainly for me—a champion of human rights. It showed in her debate, where she talked about a regulation that's preventing someone from accessing a birth certificate, which is a basic human right. We all need this documentation in order to get further documents that allow us to have other privileges. I commend her for bringing that up today in question period and also talking about how, in a sense, that part of regulations shouldn't be a blockage, a barrier to someone getting their birth certificate.

She mentioned how regulations are a good thing, and we all agree: We need regulations in order for our society to function in a way that's healthy. Rules are good. Guidelines are good. Expectations are good. Standards that we put in place are very good so that we know where we're at when we run a business; we know the rules to the game, so to speak.

But there are regulations where we want to make sure it's working that way. That's our job. We need to make regulations that actually work. Looking at cutting some of those regulations that don't work, that clog up the system, is important as well.

Again, I commend the member for talking about various things, because when she talks to this bill, she's also talking about labour laws. She's talking about human rights. She puts a lot of content around this bill. It was very interesting, and I'm going to miss her when she leaves this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the honourable member from London–Fanshawe.

I now return for final response to the MPP for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I just wanted to address a couple of things that were said here this afternoon, and I'm not sure if I'm going to have a chance to stand up and speak again on this.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound wanted to know exactly how much red tape we had already cut so far. If you'll recall, the first annual bill, the Burden Reduction Act, 2017, was passed earlier this year, in March. That particular act amended more than 50 statutes from 11 different ministries to reduce over 80,000 regulations so far—unnecessary regulations that we have already cut. We look forward to continuing to cut the unnecessary regulations and burdens that perhaps we as government are putting on businesses, especially those small businesses that the member from Parkdale–High Park referred to—my neighbour, my strong advocate next door to me who we're going to miss immensely here in this House. I know your constituents are going to miss you as well. I want to wish you well as you continue to advocate on behalf of so many people, as the human rights advocate that you are. I wanted to mention that.

You did mention the fact that we have all these upcoming companies, the emerging companies, the IT companies that we have here in this province, and them getting gobbled up. Let me tell you, as I said earlier, when I am out talking to these firms, I'm so astounded at how many people are actually coming back from Silicon Valley because this is where things are happening. Just last week, I was at MaRS. It was the first round of the scale-up vouchers, that program, that we were giving out to these new, emerging and tech-driven firms to help them scale up. So many people I met there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I thank the honourable member for Davenport.

I now return for final response to the MPP for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, everyone. Thanks for the love. It's very nice.

I wanted to mention in particular to the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, on the new federal tax changes—which, by the way, I don't think are a bad thing—to read an excellent article in the Star that was written by Linda McQuaig about those tax changes and how, in fact, the people they address mostly are the

extremely wealthy, the 0.001%. Again, the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is young: lots of time to change, lots of time to learn. Read that article. It's an excellent one on the topic of the federal tax changes.

Again, just to reiterate a few of my key points: Be very, very careful, my friends, when we talk about small business, that we're not actually talking about big business, that when we're talking about small business and legislative changes, it's not small business being pushed to the front and the big multinationals standing back and actually pulling the strings.

I do talk to small businesses. I had one myself. My son just sold a share in one. I know small business and love small business. It's the creator of most of the jobs in our province; there's no question about that. But let's make sure we're addressing their issues. And I can tell you, their major issue is not minimum wage—never was, never will be. Their major issue is the competition that they get from big business. That's the reality. Let's talk to them about it and, absolutely, help them streamline the way they do business.

One of the things we could do if we wanted to help small business is grants. We used to have a grant process for young people with great ideas. Great IT ideas are happening; just hope they stay and they are not subsumed under a multinational, over which our regulations will mean nothing.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Parkdale–High Park.

Now, for further debate, I turn to Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted I'll have about 10 minutes this afternoon. Earlier today, I had 58 seconds, so I'm pleased that I now have 10 minutes.

But first of all, I'd like to wish my lovely wife, Karan, a very happy birthday. She's celebrating her birthday today. I know how busy she's been all day; she's a principal at St. Patrick elementary school in Peterborough. There's about 300 students who go to St. Patrick, one of the great elementary schools in the Catholic system in Peterborough.

I also want to get on the record—first of all, I know in Peterborough riding it's just about dinnertime, but I know many of them are just tuning into channel 95 on Cogeco to watch this grand discussion this afternoon on Bill 154.

I also want to acknowledge in Peterborough the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Many of the members are great friends of mine. The leadership of the chamber is Stuart Harrison, the general manager, and Sandra Dueck is the policy analyst for the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce.

To those in the chamber—I'd like to extend an invitation to all 107 members. On Wednesday, October 18, will be the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce's Business Excellence Awards, an opportunity to see some of the great small businesses in Peterborough. The cost of the ticket is only \$35, so I could say to all

members of the House, it's a great bargain for \$35 at Showplace in Peterborough. For people who are unfamiliar with Peterborough, Showplace is on the main street, George Street, in downtown Peterborough. I recommend everybody take the opportunity to be there.

Last spring I had the great pleasure of joining my colleague Mr. Duguid, the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, to announce a series of measures to help nearly 450,000 small businesses and farms in the province of Ontario to grow and cut red tape. In many ways, I was pleased that the Premier gave me some additional responsibilities for small business, because when you look at the agricultural sector in the province of Ontario today, we have 50,000 family farms which are the foundation of agriculture and food in the province of Ontario. I might add that it is the largest economic driver in Ontario today: \$37 billion-plus to Ontario's GDP, employing over 800,000 Ontarians each and every day.

Look, we have many great examples of small businesses that are thriving in the broader agricultural umbrella. I'm a big fan of ice cream; I know my member across the aisle there particularly likes Chapman's. It's headquartered in Markdale, Ontario. In my part of Ontario, we happen to like Kawartha Dairy. In Kawartha Dairy's case, it started out, founded by the Crowe family, in 1937, and over the subsequent years it has grown in our part of Ontario to be a major producer of ice cream. Not only do they have their stand-alone stores in my part of Ontario, but increasingly their product is being found in all the major grocery stores across Ontario, which is quite true of my friend across the aisle—Chapman's ice cream from Markdale is finding its way through all the major supermarket outlets across the province of Ontario. That is just a great example of how small businesses have been growing in Ontario and will continue to grow.

Just recently, I had the opportunity to be in Mitchell, Ontario, to make an announcement on Sofina Foods, who are taking a previous pork-processing facility in Mitchell, Ontario and reconfiguring it to make it a turkey-processing facility in that community. To look at the confidence that the Sofina leadership has in the province of Ontario in order to continue to make investments not only in Mitchell, but into their pork-processing operation in Burlington—and while I'm talking about ice cream and turkey, I might as well get a good plug in this afternoon about supply management.

We have clearly indicated to the government of Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Freeland and Minister MacAulay that when it comes to supply management, it is a non-negotiable item during this time when we're looking at ways to renegotiate NAFTA. When you look at the supply-management sector for just a moment, there's a whole number of family farms that are part of this sector. I'd like to remind people that the quota in the province of Ontario is worth \$12 billion. We've seen enormous expansion in this sector, because they have confidence in businesspeople that their sectors continue to thrive and grow. So I just wanted to take the opportunity to reiterate that, not only on this side of the

House, but so that it be said to all the 107 members who continue to support supply management.

There are a number of areas in this bill that we believe will certainly make it easier to do business for small business in the province of Ontario—Madam Speaker, it's good to see you back in the chair—and I'd like to highlight just five things here.

For every dollar of new administrative costs imposed on businesses due to new regulation, the government will be required to offset this cost by \$1.25 by removing unnecessary costs elsewhere. This will ensure that government continues to reduce the cost of doing business on an ongoing basis.

When enacting new regulations, the government will look to harmonize with other jurisdictions where possible, so that business won't have to juggle different standards. This is very important, especially with our neighbours to the south.

Madam Speaker, if I could just talk about this for a moment: During June, I had the opportunity to visit seven states, essentially to talk about NAFTA and agriculture. We've taken the opportunity to brief the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on our trip to the States. One of the things that came out of that, and we're hoping they're looking at it during the current NAFTA negotiations, is to bring about regulatory harmony between the two countries. Particularly when it comes to agriculture, when you're dealing with perishable goods, the last thing you want is tractor-trailers sitting on the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit because there's some hang-up due to the regulatory approvals to move that in an expeditious manner. So this is one of the things that we want to look at.

I'm pleased to be here today and talk about small business with my good friend the member from Ajax, Mr. Dickson, because we all know in this House that Dickson Printing is one of the great small businesses in Durham. You look back many years ago when Joe and Donna Dickson set out, and they probably mortgaged the house and probably put the car up as collateral, because they had confidence that they wanted to start a small business. So Joe and Donna were working together, rolling up their sleeves, because in those days Joe and Donna would have been the president, the chief executive officer, the HR person and the marketing person, doing all the jobs.

Over that period of time, they were able to grow and grow and grow—and I know Joe appreciates that I'm giving this free commercial for Dickson Printing today. But they've been able to prosper and hire more people when it comes to that business, and that's just a good example of over 400,000 small businesses across the province of Ontario that employ under 100 people.

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This is an important piece of legislation. We want it to go forward. It will go to committee, and we look forward to all members around the House coming up with concrete, progressive amendments to make Bill 154 even stronger.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to also extend a happy birthday greeting to Karan. It's the member from Peterborough's wife's birthday today. I'm sure she's enjoying some great Kawartha Dairy ice cream, but we would have been pleased to send up a quart or a gallon of Chapman's because, yes, it is a favourite across the entire country.

I just want to talk a little bit about a few things—he talked about a \$1.25 saving, a reduction. It's just one of those things—again, when we talk about these, I have to bring up that people have lost confidence when we talk numbers with this Liberal government. We were told a long time ago, when I first got here, that there was only \$40 million spent on a gas plant, but it turned out to be \$1.25 billion. So when I hear numbers like that, I want to see and—I appreciate that the member from Davenport actually went and got some stats and gave me some numbers—I want to also know, how many have they added in that time? What's the net gain or the net loss? You can say you've cut, but if you've added three times as many, we really haven't gotten too far. So, again, I don't necessarily trust those numbers when I talk about it.

I'm very proud to be able to represent and to be the critic for long-term care. One of the things that sector is telling me is, this Liberal government keeps adding more regulatory burden. No one is challenging that there doesn't have to be safety regulation and things to ensure the safety of all of our residents in long-term care, but what's the value of more paperwork? Is there something that's actually going to help the patient care at the end of the day that we want to make—even within our own House, we have the regulations and private bills committee that I'm proud to sit on. We often have the legislative Clerks come out and find the government in non-compliance with their own legislation, Madam Speaker, and when we bring it up, because they have a majority, they just say, "Oh, no, the minister says it's all good. We'll just leave it alone," and we never do address it, and it comes back again and we talk about it six months later. Why can't we just address this and get it fixed rather than having people wasting time and energy talking about the same bill and the same duplication over and over?

So I hope the government will take this to heart and truly cut unnecessary regulation at every opportunity.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand in the House on Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, and to follow the remarks from the Minister of Agriculture. He spoke about supply management. If there's one example of how regulations are of benefit to producers of a product and processors and consumers, and to the province and to the country as a whole, it's supply management—and that is simply due to regulations. Those are good regulations.

If you will recall, a little while ago, in the press, the President of the United States was talking about how 70

or 80 dairy farms had lost their market and the processing plant was closed, and that was due to the Canadian system. Well, it wasn't due to the Canadian system; it was due to oversupply. You never hear stories like that here, and that's partly because of supply management—mostly because one of the rules in supply management is, farmers pool their returns and they pool their costs and they pool their losses. And it has happened—if a dairy processor goes down for whatever reason, it's not the local farmers around that certain processor who lose their livelihood. Due to supply management, all those costs are pooled. Not only do farmers pool their benefits; they also pool their losses. It's an incredibly unique system, and it's one of the reasons why all parties—I'm sure all parties in this House, and certainly most politicians across the country support this system because it's years ahead of its time. It provides local food produced under high-quality standards, and you never have to worry if there's going to be milk or eggs or chicken in the store.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Once again, it's a pleasure to speak on this bill this afternoon.

The speakers opposite just brought up supply management. I think I mentioned earlier this week, when I was debating on this bill, that prior to being elected I worked in the pharmaceutical industry. Let me tell you, if there's an industry that is inundated in regulations, it is the pharmaceutical industry. My life was standard operating procedures, day in and day out. There was a process of how to come in, and there was another procedure on how to get out—and exactly that: How are we going to keep maintaining the quality of our products? How do we know that everything is going to work and be very efficient? Because we need to be efficient. As a pharmaceutical company, we need to get product out the door—first to market, first out the door.

It was extremely important that we have regulations in place, like the member opposite spoke about in the farming industry, so we can ensure that we have eggs the next day for breakfast and that the bacon is on the table too.

Some regulations are actually good, and they can be good economic policy as well. That's what we're talking about here. We're talking about ensuring that we have the right regulations in place, but where we have those unnecessary regulations, that we cut them; that we make life easier for people; that it doesn't matter which door you come in or which door you go out in certain cases and we're not regulating that specifically; and that we're making life easier for those small businesses.

I keep going back to the small businesses because they make up 85% of our economy. They are the backbone of the economy. Those are my businesses in my riding of Davenport. That's who I have the honour of representing: these small businesses. We would not want to be burdening them with more regulations, but rather facilitating life for them so that they can create the jobs that we want here in Ontario and continue to grow our economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and it's good to see you back in the chair again.

I spoke earlier about attending the annual awards banquet for businesses that are succeeding in the region of Durham and the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. As you would expect, there was discussion of this bill. One of the comments that was made—and I made a note last night once it was over. They told me that there's a need, in terms of this bill, for much more than a dressed-up housekeeping bill masquerading as burden reduction.

They suggested—and I included it in my remarks today. They pointed me to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business report. They highlighted for me the section that I read earlier: “The government should consider using its approach to calculating red tape savings, to determine the overall cost of its rules”—we're all conscious of the size of the deficit here in the province of Ontario, \$312 billion and rising—“and to put in place a hard cap on the cost of the rules in the system. In the meantime, they should be careful not to add additional burdensome rules through initiatives that could undermine its progress on burden reduction in other areas.”

Yes, the member from Davenport is correct: I've been in the House now for well over a year and a half and there has been work, but we have 380,000 regulations. Much more work needs to be done.

We also understand the importance of regulations related to health and safety and the agricultural sector and other sectors, but we also understand what these regulations are doing in impeding small businesses from succeeding here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and small business to wrap up.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to acknowledge all my friends in the House this afternoon.

Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: I must say to him that it was a delight to see the former member at the International Plowing Match, my good friend Bill Murdoch. When Bill was here, I used to get him a lot of hockey jerseys from all the retired NHL hockey players in my community in Peterborough. I was Bill's pipeline, so he was able to get a lot of those jerseys from people like my good friend Bob Gainey, who had a stellar career with the Montreal Canadiens.

The members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Davenport and Whitby–Oshawa: You know, Madam Speaker, I have a lot of friends in the Durham business community, so let me tell you what they tell me. One of the things that annoys them to no end is the gouging of toll rates on the Highway 407 ETR. Madam Speaker, let me give you a little history here. This was an asset that was valued at \$9 billion. I'm going to repeat that: \$9 billion. Then, in 1999, the government of the day had a fire sale.

1720

Do you know Walmart, when they roll down the prices? It started at \$9 billion and went to 8, 7, 6, 5, 4—finally, they sold it off at \$3 billion. Just yesterday, there was an article about the 407 ETR being like an ATM for life for the Spanish consortium that owns it, SNC-Lavalin. And thank goodness, because I'm 62—I'll be 65 soon—and the Canada Pension Plan is one of the major shareholders. They're making so much money from that that it's allowing the CPP to be very buoyant when it comes to the payouts down the road. That's what the Durham business community is talking to me about—that sale, and gouging people in Durham.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 154. Given that this might be the last time I rise to speak to a bill introduced by the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, the member from Scarborough Centre, I want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his service and wish him well in his life after politics.

I do want to point out that the title of this bill is redundant: the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. The term "red tape" refers to unnecessary or excessive regulation. To quote the Collins English Dictionary, "You refer to official rules and procedures as red tape when they seem unnecessary and cause delay."

That being said, I completely support anything that reduces red tape. One of my first roles here at Queen's Park, when I was elected in 2001, was as a member of the Red Tape Commission. At that time, my wife and I were still operating a lodge on Lake Muskoka, so I was only too familiar with the challenges that small businesses faced in cutting through red tape.

I recall, sitting on the Red Tape Commission, that they'd look at any particular legislation that was before the Legislature and evaluate it through an economic test, but you could also bring in things from your constituency. I remember bringing in, one day, 30 letters of rejection from a constituent for the Northern Health Travel Grant. This was a person who had cancer and who had to travel for 30 days for treatment, and the bureaucracy had sent out 30 separate letters, one for each separate trip, to reject them—as an example of something that was just a ridiculous way of doing it. Hopefully, they've changed that procedure now.

In 2008-09, I served as opposition critic for small business. In this role, I heard from small business people across the province. One of the most mind-boggling stories I heard at that time was that of a resort owner who was contacted by the Ministry of the Environment and asked to provide copies of the certificates of approval for each of his small waste water systems. So the ministry was asking for copies of certificates it had issued because, apparently, the ministry couldn't find them. How is it reasonable that, when the ministry loses certificates it issued, it somehow becomes the responsibility of the business owner to provide them?

I would say, Madam Speaker, that over time, government has become less helpful to business and more liability-averse. I recall my own experience, in 30 years of running a resort, back in the 1980s, applying to that ministry, the Ministry of the Environment, for septic system approval. I'd go down to Gravenhurst, where the office—which no longer exists—was. They were actually helpful and provided assistance in the application process. For the last septic system that I applied for just as I was being elected, it had changed very much, and the government was not helpful at all. You basically had to hire someone even to do the application.

There was another story from a convenience store owner who was threatened with a \$10,000 fine if he couldn't produce receipts for cigars he had purchased over the previous four years. At no point since he had purchased the business had anyone from the government come around to offer him any advice on how to comply with all the government regulations—only to inspect his business and catch him when he made a mistake.

I note that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is looking for one-window service for small business, because most small businesses are not trying to break the rules, but it's virtually impossible, if you're a business of three or four people, to know what all the rules are. I think government has an obligation, first of all, to make rules that are easy to follow and, secondly, to provide some assistance to businesses that are just trying to follow the rules and trying to make a buck. Usually the rules they're trying to follow have nothing to do with helping them actually succeed in their business. So I think government needs to become much more helpful.

Unfortunately, that is an example of what government is becoming under this government. Rather than being a partner to help businesses succeed within the rules, government has taken on more of a role of policing—just sending in inspectors to catch mistakes. Certainly that was, again, in my own experience, the case that I saw over the years.

Back in the mid-1970s was the first time I ever saw a fire inspector show up. Over the next 20 years to 25 years the same inspector came around all the time. Glen Medland was his name; unfortunately he passed on. At that time we were primarily a seasonal resort. He would come in and give me a little warning about what new rules were coming along and would advise me that, "You're going to have to put in five-eighths fire code gypsum, alarm systems and various things." He would also time his inspections so that it was near the end of the season, knowing that there was some leeway in how fast he had to do it, so we could do it over the winter when the business was closed. When he finished working, it got to the point where he basically said, "If I find anything wrong I just have to write a violation. I can't provide any assistance; I can't do anything to assist you. All I can do is find something wrong and write the violation."

That isn't a good system. It was better the way it was before, where government actually provided some assist-

ance. And I do believe that, in the rules we write, we make them so prescriptive versus setting an objective you're trying to achieve and letting business figure out how to get there and do it, versus saying absolutely every fine detail about what a business must do to comply with some regulation.

As a result of the change in mentality, with government being just like the police and sending in inspectors, business becomes nervous about calling government to ask questions. They're afraid to ask questions in an honest attempt to work within the rules because they're afraid that it will just bring on some inspection—I can see my speech is much too long for the time frame I have here.

In 2008, I introduced Bill 121, the Red Tape Reduction Policy Act. I introduced this bill because I was hearing from small business owners in my riding and across Ontario that they were drowning in red tape and excessive inspections. If my private member's bill had passed, it would have created a test which draft legislation would have been required to satisfy. That test would have required that any minister introducing legislation:

- identify the regulatory burden that the bill would impose;
- identify the costs of the regulatory burden;
- do a cost-benefit analysis of the regulatory burden;
- consult the people who would bear the regulatory burden;
- assess the impact of the regulatory burden on the competitiveness of Ontario business;
- identify any overlap between the new legislation and any other legislation or regulations from this or any other level of government; and, finally,
- write the regulations in plain language to be easily understood.

If this government really wanted to cut red tape, they would have passed my bill or adopted it or similar legislation of their own. But what happened? Bill 121 was debated in November 2008, passed second reading and sat on the order paper until the Legislature was prorogued in March 2010. It sat on the docket for the Standing Committee on General Government until it died when Premier McGuinty prorogued the Legislature. I would prefer to be debating my bill, but at least we're debating a bill about red tape.

It is good that this bill allows for more than one vice-chair of the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board, in order to reduce wait times for hearings. It is good that this bill allows for the electronic application for pesticides licences; one would hope that we could apply for any licence electronically by now.

The ministry estimates that this bill, if passed, will save the private sector between \$6.3 million and \$8.9 million. That is good, but it's only a drop in the bucket. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that the cost of regulation in Ontario grew from \$12.79 billion in 2005 to \$14.758 billion in 2014. That's an increase of 15%, or almost \$2 billion. Obviously the

changes that are going to be brought about by this bill are relatively minor.

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Add those additional regulatory costs to the increased cost of electricity; the cost of the Ontario health premium; Bill 148, the labour bill that's bringing about a 32% increase in the minimum wage and other labour changes, and it's no wonder that businesses, especially small businesses, are having difficulty.

Madam Speaker, I can see I'm out of time, so I'll end there and try to get the rest in in the two minutes that I get at the end.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always interesting to listen to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka because he actually does his homework and they're very thoughtful comments. But I'm a bit of a word nerd, and as we were having this debate, I thought, "Where does this term come from?" And it's instructive, because I'm here, the defender of regulations and, hey, some red tape.

Apparently Henry VIII, when he wanted his annulment from Catherine of Aragon, actually bound the petitions with red string when he was arguing back and forth with the Pope of the day. Depending on how you feel about the right to divorce and annulment, it may be a good thing.

But apparently, where the term really comes from is a 16th-century Spanish king, Charles V, who bound the most important dossiers and important documents with red tape. The ones that weren't so important, the ones that were really fly-by-night and that he didn't care that much about, didn't have the red tape. So it actually has changed over the centuries from being a positive thing to being a negative thing.

Anyway, I'm just defending government's function as a regulatory body. That's what we do. Yes, sometimes we ice the cake a little bit much; sometimes it's not essential. And of course, it's better to do things online in the computer age than not. But there is a function here that's so important, and I think we denigrate our function as government when we mock what our function is, and that is to be a regulatory and taxing body.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to have a chance to have a two-minute response to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Yes, I acknowledge that he has had a number of private member's bills and opportunities focused on exactly that: a red tape review and reducing the burdens from government.

I remember floating around these halls 20 years ago when Frank Klees was running the Red Tape Commission—Frank Klees, with his beautiful checked jackets. He was focused, and that was part of the direction: It was to get rid of all the red tape that they thought was standing in the way of businesses making money. But I think there's an acknowledgement, and we heard it from the member from Parkdale, about the history and

that there are positive reasons that you want to have regulations and red tape in government.

What we have been doing on red tape in our government is sort of exemplified in the work of the Treasury Board and its program renewal, review and transformation process, where it's reviewing all programs and looking for duplication and looking for opportunity for streamlining and efficiencies, which is resulting in tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars of savings. It's one of the processes, Speaker, that's allowed us get to a balanced budget from the nearly \$13.5-billion deficit when I was elected in 2014. And that's just the government side of the savings we're getting.

In the Red Tape Review Commission, we've been very successful with our sector programs in reducing red tape for businesses out there. In fact, I think we've been so successful that I'm really encouraged that, should I have the opportunity again in my life to go back into the private sector and start up some of my businesses, I might not be burdened with so much red tape that is unnecessary, and I can go on and continue to make a healthy living in that kind of work.

We passed our first annual burden reduction bill, made 150 amendments to 50 statutes in 11 ministries, saving businesses up to \$31.5 million dollars in that one initiative alone. This gives us another opportunity to look at it, and we're looking forward to getting it passed.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka—30 years in business. He gave an example of that septic system permitting process, and that government, really, many times now, has moved—it's always more and more questions and asks about, “How do we keep you from getting into business and moving forward in business?” than actually helping you find ways to be successful and thrive.

He introduced the Red Tape Reduction Policy Act, Bill 121, in 2008, and referenced that it got prorogued by the government and never did see the light of day. But what he asked for in there was some cost-benefit analysis. What's going to be the impact when you put new regulation in, and what's the burden going to be on business? What's that ripple effect on the people who get the services from there?

In his discussion, he referenced some of the challenges of business. The health tax: Many people have forgotten about it. It was supposed to come in for one time only, and it's still there and it's still being charged. He talked about the exorbitant electricity rates—300% to 400% increases. Again, the government tries to suggest, “We're going to give you 25% of your own money back and all is going to be rosy.” The reality is that they're going to borrow \$25 billion to do that. It's going to cost upwards of \$43 billion and, in the worst-case scenario, \$93 billion. They can reduce a little bit of red tape, but they've really burdened us.

One of the members over there talked about an initiative that was going to cost \$9 billion. Their Green

Energy Act is going to cost \$133 billion, and the hydro relief \$93 billion, as I just said. The Beaches–East York member just talked about a balanced budget. I believe both the Auditor General and the fiscal accountability officer have said that those are short-term realities that are going to go the other way, and we're going to be back in debt and deficit again if this government keeps spending the way they do.

I'm pleased to see they're looking, at least. At least they understand some of their challenges now. I struggle with how we can trust any of the numbers they put out. He just suggested a \$31-million savings. I'm going to reference it again: They told us the gas plants would cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$40 million. It was \$1.2 billion. That's red tape and boondoggles.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to join in the debate once again. I, too, enjoyed listening to the comments from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He always brings forward many understandable issues. Often, when we talk about millions and billions, people don't really care about millions and billions. They care about—

Mr. Bill Walker: The Liberals don't, but we do.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, they do care—but you need to relate to what they see.

One thing that hasn't been talked about, or I haven't heard—maybe a little bit—even when we can all agree that regulations are necessary, it's very frustrating when you want to comply with the regulations and you want to work within the regulatory regime, and the regime doesn't respond quickly enough and it costs you a lot of time, aggravation and, quite frankly, opportunity.

I'll give you an example. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines is changing the Mining Act. Okay, fine. But now they're in the changeover, and just as we're going through the changeover, we happen to be going through a mini mining boom in my area, because our area has a lot of silver and cobalt. Cobalt never used to be in demand, but now, because of electric cars, it's in demand. There's a staking boom going on in a lot of parts of the north, including Timiskaming–Cochrane.

You stake a plot and then you go to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to register that plot. Then you have the right to do the investigation of that plot to try to get a major mining company interested. Usually, that takes about a month, but now it's taking four or five months. That's a huge opportunity cost when it's your job to investigate and stake claims.

These people want to work with the government, but they're being forced out of business because the government is not reacting.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to wrap up.

Mr. Norm Miller: Certainly those were some interesting comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park, talking about the Spanish king and red tape and educating us about that.

The member from Beaches–East York: I believe it was Frank Sheehan, not Frank Klees, who was the chair of the Red Tape Commission.

Also, thanks to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who was talking about MNDM responses. Of course, he represents an area with some famous silver veins. I believe you find cobalt around silver veins.

I was going to use timeliness of permitting in mining as an example of something that could be improved on. I toured Detour Gold in the Cochrane area, and in the hour-and-a-half ride out to the mine, we had a discussion about, “What’s your biggest issue?” The biggest issue was the timeliness of permitting for a mine in the province of Ontario. There is duplication between the federal rules and the provincial rules.

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Another northern issue is certainly the application of the Endangered Species Act duplicating the Crown Forest Sustainability Act in the north. It’s a huge issue in the north right now. I was recently up there meeting with a mill manager, and he was talking about the fact that he’d been a hunter—he’d hunted his whole life. He’d never seen a caribou, and yet they’re doing caribou recovery plans for caribou that don’t exist that could affect the livelihood of the whole mill, a mill that employs 70% indigenous people. The livelihood of all those people is at risk because of the way the Endangered Species Act is being enforced.

I could give many other examples, but I see I’m out of time. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am proud to rise and speak as the member of London–Fanshawe to the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. To say the scope of this bill is ambitious would be, really, an understatement. Ironically, I think it has been beneficial for many of us in the Legislature to have had the opportunity for further technical briefings on this massive bill. It is extensive, to say the least. It truly is a massive bill.

The bill proposes amendments to over 100 different acts and aims to reduce the regulatory burden on both businesses and on the government, and proposes the creation of a new act titled Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, which covers everything from changing electronic signatures to amending disclosure agreements between a franchisor and a franchisee, to proposed changes to the Pesticides Act.

The purpose of the bill is to modernize Ontario and get rid of the excessive bureaucracy that bogs us down and has a detrimental effect on how we conduct business, with the aim of saving money for both the government and businesses. That’s really the objective.

With over 400,000 regulations in place in this province, it makes sense that legislation is being introduced to cut those numbers back and make life easier for everyone, but we have to be certain that, as we are stripping

away these regulations, it’s not creating pitfalls and having a negative impact elsewhere.

We need to examine this bill, which is quite robust, piece by piece to see what works and what doesn’t, and we need to put people and small businesses first. If the goal of this bill is to increase transparency, the government owes it to small business owners and young people entering the workforce, who may not have the legal resources or background, to make sense of its nuts and bolts.

In my community of London, a large part of our community is made up of small family-owned businesses. Cutting red tape to benefit smaller businesses sounds like the right thing to do, but government needs to make it abundantly clear not only to those of us in the Legislature but to small business owners, families, as well as young entrepreneurs, what those terms are. London is a city that is quickly growing. The population is made up of hard-working, creative, ambitious people who are eager to start new businesses and carry on ones that have been in their family for generations.

I spoke in the House earlier this week about the London Plan, which is the result of a project titled ReThink London. ReThink London was comprised of over 10,000 Londoners who rallied together over a two-year period to design a 20-year urban plan that envisioned the city sprawling upward and inward to reduce its carbon footprint, creating a strong neighbourhood-centric city with a rich culture and economy.

I spoke about the London Plan in the context of the government’s alleged plans to revamp the OMB. Funnily enough, the work of over 10,000 Londoners who have a bright vision of the future that would significantly contribute to Ontario’s culture and economy has been bogged down in red tape and is now sitting in administrative limbo.

For young families who want to stay in their hometown of London instead of moving to a larger urban centre for employment, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act is a step in the right direction if properly realized, but we’ve seen this government make tantalizing promises in the past, only to falter on its delivery when it really matters.

But overall, this bill looks like a positive piece of legislation that could benefit families and small businesses across the province, but aspects of the bill are vague and somewhat troubling. Schedule 4 stipulates that when a new regulation is made that creates or adds another layer of administration cost to businesses, in this case a prescribed offset must be made within a prescribed period of time after the regulation is made or approved.

Again, the government needs to be crystal clear to small business owners on what the implications of these regulatory costs are, in plain and simple terms. We need to know, when one regulation is enacted under this bill, what the potential fallout is, or whether or not this is beneficial.

Many aspects of the bill are not only vague but contradictory. Schedule 4 also cites regulations that impose

requirements on businesses, where appropriate, and less onerous compliance requirements on small business, yet there is no explicit definition of “small business,” which is a major problem.

London and its neighbouring townships are surrounded by and situated in rich farmland, so one of the pieces under schedule 5 pertains to London in a relevant way. A proposed amendment to the Pesticides Act removes the six-month work limit on non-licensed or non-exempt assistants to structural exterminators, but also removes the seven-day work limit on assistants to licensed land and water exterminators.

Again, the government needs to be explicit about the implications of these terms and what it potentially means for people who are working with dangerous chemicals. Is it safe to remove the limits of how much exposure these people are getting to pesticides and other dangerous chemicals? More importantly, what is the benefit of removing these work limits, and who does it benefit? Those are some of the questions we have to ask, Speaker, when we're talking about these regulations.

Once you start to read the fine print of this bill, there are glaring problems and issues that raise concern, and many of the finer points require serious clarification.

Schedule 9 is another problematic part of the bill, which seeks to amend the Arthur Wishart Act. Under the current act, a franchisor must provide a franchisee with a disclosure document at least 14 days before signing a franchise agreement or any other agreement relating to the franchise. That's reasonable.

The amendments to the act create new exceptions to this disclosure requirement whereby the franchisor is no longer required to provide disclosure documents if the agreement they have with a prospective franchisee contains certain terms that require any information provided to the prospective franchisee to be kept confidential; prohibit the use of any information provided to the prospective franchisee; or designate a site, location or territory for the prospective franchisee.

The terms of schedule 9, where disclosure in the franchisee-franchisor relationship is concerned, are cause for concern, to say the least, and speak to a broader problem of transparency, oversight and accountability. Really, Speaker, that is a problem this government has to acknowledge.

Professionals entering into a working agreement should feel encouraged and uncompromised, particularly young entrepreneurs.

While there are problems with this bill, cutting back on red tape and the 400,000 or so regulations in place is a change, I think, in the direction of a better place. Small businesses should be thriving, and Ontario should become a more attractive destination to conduct business.

I hope it is not only the intention of this government to make life easier for wealthy corporations with unlimited resources, but that it is also to make life easier for families struggling to make ends meet, and to allow smaller businesses and new businesses to flourish. That's where we have to really pay attention, I think, because larger

corporations have vast access to all kinds of resources because they have the money to do that.

In my community of London, we have a vibrant and growing seniors population. I'm the seniors critic, Speaker, and I know this. Some of these seniors, as was mentioned by my colleague in the Legislature yesterday, may not have access to high-speed Internet, so many of these proposals of electronically streaming services may not be helpful to that population. We have to keep that in mind, Speaker. It's very important.

Young people, who are eager to get into the workforce and start their careers, deserve to be in a climate that will help them grow and thrive as young professionals. Scaling back the red tape, as is generally laid out in this bill, will make it easier to start a small business or carry on existing family businesses.

We need to ensure that small businesses are reaping the full benefit of this bill and that young entrepreneurs are entering into healthy work agreements and are in healthy, closely regulated environments. Again, regulations are a good thing. We need to make sure, especially for the workforce, that we have those regulations in the Employment Standards Act, to protect people.

Again, while many aspects of this bill are troubling and require further investigation and clarity, it appears that this bill could potentially benefit the province's economy and ease the regulatory burden on both government and small businesses.

Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Armstrong has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading debate adjourned.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 152

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Point of order: I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts, on Wednesday, October 11 and Thursday, October 12, 2017, for the purpose of public hearings in Kenora and Moose Factory or Moosonee; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 152:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website, Canada NewsWire, Wawatay News and Turtle Island News, if possible; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 p.m. on Friday, October 6, and that the committee be authorized to consider and schedule requests received after the deadline; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 12; and

—That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Friday, October 13, and that the committee be authorized to consider late amendments; and

—That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, October 16 and Wednesday, October 18 during its regularly scheduled meeting times for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, three hours of debate shall be allotted to the third

reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Minister Albanese has moved that the Standing Committee—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Dispense? Agreed.

Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

The House will be adjourned until Monday, October 2, 2017, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1753.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
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Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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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 (IND)	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, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

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) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe 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	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**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
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, 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 / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
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
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
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, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, 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
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
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Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
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Peter Tabuns
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