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41^e législature

Lundi
23 octobre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 October 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 octobre 2017

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai de la grande visite. Today the page captain is Rochelle Lariviere. Elle est ici avec ses parents, Carolyn et Roc Lariviere, et son frère, Remy Lariviere. Her grandmother Anita Devies and her grandfather Charlie Booth are here, ainsi que sa tante Margaux Booth. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Recipients from Kingston, who are receiving the Governor General's emergency medical services exemplary service award: Terry Baker and Barry McGrath.

I also have, for the Turkish Republic Day proclamation, Mr. Alakuşu from the consulate of Turkey in Toronto; Mr. Bora Celikel, the co-president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Celal Uçar, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society of Canada; Mrs. Yildiz Ünsal, VP of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation; Mr. Ismail Vataner, president of the Balkan Turks association; and Mr. Hasan Yabas, director of the FCTA.

Visitors from the Rohingya petition: I've got Zermaan Khan from my riding of Kingston and the Islands with his family, Anwer Khan, Abida Khan, Raya Khan, Maazin Khan, Fatimah Khan, Mariam Baig, Mr. Mudassar Butt and Momin Baig.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a reminder: People are introducing people.

Thank you.

Mr. Ross Romano: I have a few special guests today in the lower gallery I want to introduce. Firstly, my father-in-law, Alvaro Mendes from Markham, and my mother-in-law, Doreen Mendes, also from Markham; and my two-year-old son, Jarrett Romano, who I'm sure will be heckling me later on.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Willy Noiles to the Legislature. Willy is president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups. Welcome to Queen's Park, Willy.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It certainly is family day in the Legislature today. I have with me my mother, Lena Fedeli, my 12-year-old niece, Maggie Fedeli, my Aunt Emelia,

my in-laws, Erma and Chuck Kelly, as well as my constituency assistant from North Bay, Julie Kingsbury.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to welcome back into this House Jagmeet Singh, the former MPP for the riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton and the national leader of the New Democratic Party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to give the leader of the third party a hard time—it's only when they're a member they introduce them. Now he's not a member. He's a member somewhere else.

So, welcome, Jagmeet. We're glad you're here with us. Further introductions?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Jacob Will: parents, Melanie and Steve Will, sisters, Virginia and Selena Will, uncle Larry Will, grandmother June Will, and grandparents Gail and Roy Rader. Welcome to the Legislature today. Enjoy your time.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my privilege to introduce in the members' gallery this morning a good friend of mine, Tim Schindel and also Murray Wright. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

We have in the Speaker's gallery a couple of groups. Today, we have teachers from across Ontario participating in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teacher's Forum. I want to thank the staff for putting this program together. In its third year, it has grown immensely and we love the fact that teachers are here from all over Ontario to learn about this place and to take it back and tell them we're not so bad. So, I want to welcome all of the teachers who have joined us today from Ontario. Welcome.

We also have with us a very important delegation from the Parliament of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels in Belgium. They are led here by the assembly president, M. Philippe Courard. Welcome to our assembly.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR BRAMALEA-GORE-MALTON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also, I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Jagmeet Singh as member from the electoral district of Bramalea-Gore-Malton, effective October 20, 2017.

Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer in the issue of a writ for a by-election. Thank you, Jagmeet, for your service.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is therefore time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ross Romano: To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation: Recently I travelled to the Matawa First Nations of Nibinamik, Webequie, Neskantaga and Eabametoong to see the living conditions there.

1040

Nibinamik fears a community evacuation because their power system may not survive the winter. They, along with Neskantaga, have been on a boil-water advisory for decades. Imagine an entire generation of youth not knowing something as simple as turning on the tap for a glass of water.

These and many other poor conditions are causing an even greater tragedy: There is a suicide epidemic that is claiming the lives of too many young children. Can you even fathom the state of hopelessness when kids as young as 12 are taking their own lives? These conditions exist in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and they are unacceptable.

To the minister: What will you do to bring immediate relief to these First Nations? Will you end the power and the water crisis now? Will you take action to end the tragic suicide epidemic that is killing Ontario's youth?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that important question. The water issue, the clean water issue, is of utmost paramountcy to this government; indeed, to First Nations; and, I should add, to the federal government. That's why this government is working closely with the federal government to resolve this clean water issue. The federal government has responsibility for on-reserve matters—clean drinking water—but the provincial government plays an important role in working with the federal government, in working with First Nations, in providing provincial expertise in water treatment.

Speaker, I have been to 119 or 120 First Nations, especially in the remote northern communities. Part of my visit always includes a trip to the water treatment facility, if there is one. In some First Nations, there is not a water treatment facility.

I can tell you, when you see the difficulties with the water treatment facilities and then you go to other First Nations and you see that they don't even have a water—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Ross Romano: Again to the minister: The socio-economic and infrastructure challenges within these communities are similar to those we would see in Third World countries.

Following the discovery of the Ring of Fire, the Liberal government signed a regional framework agreement, the RFA, with all the Matawa First Nations communities so that these living conditions could be addressed in the

consultation process. The Liberals then hired high-priced consultants to negotiate the Ring of Fire road development. It has been 11 years now and there has been no progress on the road beyond Liberal announcements filled with empty election promises.

To date, these failed negotiations have wasted taxpayers in excess of \$30 million.

After all this wasted money, these communities continue to live in Third World conditions and are in desperate need of help.

To the minister: Wouldn't you think that all this money would have been better spent on solutions to the living conditions in these communities as opposed to padding the pockets of high-priced Liberal consultants?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for the question. Necessary components to relieving the difficult conditions we find in the Far North are economic development, resource development and finding a way for First Nations to share responsibly and fairly in the benefits of resource development.

I know the member opposite was on a tour of the Ring of Fire recently. I, too, about two weeks ago, was at the Ring of Fire with Minister Mauro and Minister Gravelle, executives from Noront and chiefs from the Matawa tribal council. We had an on-site meeting. We sat in a ring in the outdoors, at the Ring of Fire. We received a thorough briefing from the chiefs, from Noront and from the political people that attended that meeting.

I can tell you that there is a willingness from the First Nations, from Noront and from government to develop the Ring of Fire so that we can provide the economic opportunity, which will go a long, long way to improving conditions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I remind the minister and all members: When I stand, you sit.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Ross Romano: Again to the minister: The road that was initially proposed to unlock the economic opportunity in the Ring of Fire runs through Matawa First Nations lands and, as such, requires their consent. To obtain that consent, the Liberal government signed an RFA with these communities, promising to negotiate in good faith.

Eabametoong and Neskantaga have not agreed to this development, fearing the road alone will not address or improve their community living conditions.

The Premier's answer to this roadblock was to change the rules of the RFA. Now she plans to reroute the road to avoid their lands so that they won't have a say. However, Eabametoong and Neskantaga hold historical land claims in the Ring of Fire.

This is a slap in the face to those negotiations. To the minister: Is this your government's idea of good-faith negotiations?

Hon. Bill Mauro: You've got to pick a lane. You can't drive in both lanes at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order.

Hon. David Zimmer: The reason that Minister Gravelle and I, Minister Mauro, Noront executives and the Ring of Fire chiefs went to the Ring of Fire about two weeks ago—we spent the day there in extensive briefings, extensive consultations, to find out how best to deal with the transportation corridor issue. Obviously, if we're going to extract minerals with the involvement and the participation of First Nations, there has to be a transportation corridor to remove those minerals, those assets, to smelters and other places. That was the purpose of the meeting. That's why this government has set aside a billion dollars for a transportation corridor.

We are presently in negotiations with our federal counterparts. We are in negotiations with the private sector to execute a plan that is satisfactory to the nine Matawa chiefs. The meeting—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier. Under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, the finance minister is required to provide a fall economic statement. Over the last 30 days, we've all heard the warnings made about this government's documents. The Legislature's Financial Accountability Office says the budget will not balance because the numbers are based on "unlikely assumptions." Last month, the Auditor General said this government has "significantly misstated" the numbers for two years running. Last week, the AG said the government "is making up its own accounting rules."

To the Acting Premier: Is there even a remote chance we're going to see any numbers we can believe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Acting Premier and Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I reject the premise of this question and the notion which the individual is trying to also reflect. The fact is that Ontario, by all accounts, is leading Canada. We have the lowest unemployment in 17 years, almost 800,000 net new jobs from the depths of the recession. We've been very open and transparent and we've beaten our targets consistently, year over year, as attested by public accounts, which the Auditor General does confirm.

The member opposite may talk about expectations and exaggerations. We deal with the facts here, and we are exceeding and delivering for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier. Well, that's certainly not what the Auditor General told us last week.

The transparency act also requires the finance minister to release August and February reports every year, but, sadly, this minister has missed issuing almost all of them since his appointment. Considering the lack of trust in this government's numbers, we can see why they choose to snub their nose at our laws.

The minister is also required to publish a pre-election finance report, to be reviewed by the Auditor General. The government must provide detailed accounts, the very numbers that the Financial Accountability Officer says would "not be achieved," the very numbers the Auditor General says we "cannot rely on."

Will the government produce a pre-election report? Will there be any numbers in it we can actually believe?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is a good question, and I'll tell you why. That party, when they were in power, gave us a bogus budget that contained a \$5.5-billion—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Because of their practices in the past, we passed a law requiring that all governments, going forward, must be open and transparent and deliver those very opportunities for the entire province to see before the next election. We are doing that. The fall economic statement is going to be delivered very shortly as will the future reports that are being questioned here.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I turn to the member, I would ask him to listen.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the Acting Premier: The two reports aren't the only documents the members of the House are waiting for, Speaker. The government has withheld thousands of emails from the Auditor General and spent \$500,000 on hired lawyers to stall their release. The Auditor General and this Legislature are entitled to those documents—not some of them, Speaker; all of them—and we want them now. Not only that, but the media were told in a response to a freedom of information request that no documents on consultants exist, when clearly they do.

Speaker, to the Acting Premier: The last Liberals that said there were no documents are now in a courtroom down the street. Is that where this one is heading too?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Our government remains committed to being open and transparent and continues to co-operate—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We continue to co-operate with the Office of the Auditor General. For example, the Independent Electricity System Operator has so far provided 1,200 records to the Auditor General. OPG has provided hundreds of records. The Ontario Financing Authority has provided 3,242. The Treasury Board has provided thousands of records. We've provided 13,212. In this process, Mr. Speaker, and throughout everyday operations, we're adhering to all document retention standards.

Additionally, the ministry has informed me that we're continuing to release additional information to the

Auditor General, and we're doing this because we understand the importance of providing the auditor with everything that she has asked for. The ministry has been regularly providing the Auditor General with additional responsive documents each week, and we'll continue to adhere to this process.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Thanks to the Auditor General, we now know that the Premier and her Liberal government are forcing Ontario families to pay \$4 billion just to hide the damage that her hydro borrowing scheme will do in the long run. We know that she was warned about the cost, we know she was given other options and we know she went ahead anyway.

Can the Acting Premier tell us who made the decision to ignore staff warnings and push ahead with a \$4-billion scheme?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, the premise of the question is erroneous. The estimation by the Financial Accountability Officer made reference to what he felt were estimated numbers based on estimated borrowings, which we're reminding everyone that that is not actually what has taken place. So the premise of the question is erroneous.

There is a plan before us which reduces hydro rates, electricity rates, for Ontarians across the province by 25%, enabling us to do so in a responsible manner, which the opposition have now declined.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I would trust the estimations of the FAO and the Auditor General much more than I would expect to trust the estimations of the government. If you recall, this government estimated a \$40-million cost of the gas plants scandal, and that was \$1.1 billion, so I'm not going to take their estimations; definitely not.

In addition to the \$4 billion that this Premier spent to hide the real cost of her \$40-billion borrowing scheme, they also forked over another \$2 million to consultants to help design said scheme. Since they won't tell us about the \$4 billion, will the Liberal government at least make these consultants' contracts public so Ontarians know who exactly it is that's advising the Premier and what direction she was given?

Hon. Charles Sousa: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, I think it's important to understand that the numbers that the leader of the third party is throwing around were estimates of something or other—projections that came from the FAO. They were not documents that were ever presented to cabinet on which to base a decision. They were projections that came after the fact. They were not cabinet decision-making documents.

The decision that cabinet did make was an important policy decision to say that things that actually have to do with electricity production belong on the rate base, from

an accounting and from a real perspective—a financial, fiscal plan perspective. Things which have social policy impacts belong on the tax base. That's exactly what the accounting is based on, that policy decision to put electricity on the rate base.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have not been gobsmailed in this place for a long time, but for a minister to get up and talk about estimations of "something or other" is pretty worrisome. For a governing party to do that is pretty worrisome.

We know that the Liberal government knew how much it was going to cost to hide the disastrous effect of their borrowing scheme from the public. We know that they knew it was going to cost Ontario families \$4 billion to do, and clearly they just didn't care that they were going to spend \$4 billion to cook up this scheme. We also know that the people of this province paid an additional \$2 million for consultants to tell them how to pull it off.

Why is the Liberal government putting themselves and their party ahead of families once again? They're looking after their political interests, the interests of the Liberals and this Premier, instead of the interests of the families in this province, who are struggling just to make ends meet and pay their skyrocketing hydro bills.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to our policy decision, we actually made a decision that helps every single family in this province by reducing their electricity bills by 25%. Then we went even further: We brought forward our social programs, the OESP program and the RRRP program, for those folks who live in rural or northern parts of our province. They're going to see a 40% to 50% reduction on their bill. That's the policy decision that we made as a government. We made sure that we kept electricity generating assets on the electricity side, and those social programs that I talked about, we pulled those off of the rate base to lower the rates even more and we put that on the tax base.

When it comes to putting families first, it's this government that does so. It's this government that brought forward the reduction, and it's this government that continues to bring forward plans and policies that will—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Wrap up, please—one sentence.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is this government, not the opposition, that is making a difference in the lives of families in this province each and every day.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Hydro bills in Ontario have gone up 300% under this Liberal government. They've gone up 50% just under the Premier's reign alone, but instead of

reversing her wrong-headed decision to sell off Hydro One, the Premier paid consultants \$2 million to design a \$4-billion financial scheme designed to hide the fact that she's costing Ontario families \$40 billion more than necessary.

Instead of remortgaging the cost of hydro on the backs of Ontarians, why didn't this Liberal government come up with a real solution to address the skyrocketing hydro prices in this province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The solution that we brought forward is a 25% reduction for all homes in this province, for all families, and for 500,000 small businesses and farms. Their plan doesn't do anything to even address taking one cent off of anyone's bills. They didn't even include First Nations or even contemplate what we can do for low-income individuals, where we did. We brought forward the Ontario Electricity Support Program. We have an on-reserve First Nations delivery credit, and we've also created the RRRP.

We've made sure that we've looked after the individuals in our province, and we know we've got more work to do. We'll continue to have consultations to talk about small businesses. We'll continue to work with our large industries, unlike the opposition party which has no plan, and one which has a plan that won't work. This plan on this side of the House is saving all families in this province money.

1100

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is my second, Speaker.

Sadly, sadly, sadly, the people from Ontario have seen all too closely the Liberal plan. That's why the hydro rates are going up in this province: because of Liberal plans, because of what the Liberals have done to our electricity system over 14 years.

The Premier has taken responsibility already for the high cost of hydro in Ontario. She actually said that it was her own fault. When will the Liberal government take responsibility for using billions of public dollars to try to deceive Ontario families into believing that she actually fixed the problem that she caused?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

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

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to helping families in this province, a 25% reduction means that rates are going down. They're going down for every single household, they're going down for 500,000 small businesses and farms, and we're continuing to work to reduce our rates even more.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We did have to make sure that we invested \$70 billion in the system, to make sure that we can have a clean system and a reliable system. I know that today, that system that we have is over 90% GHG-free. We're making sure that there is no

coal in our electricity supply mix. We are the tip of the spear when it comes to North America.

I know the opposition parties will talk about it, but this is action that we've done. We've lowered our emissions. We've made sure we're helping the health care system, because this is saving dollars on our health care side. These were the right things to do. At the end of the day, we'll continue to—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The running tab for the cost of the Premier's hydro borrowing scheme is this: \$40 billion for the plan itself; \$4 billion to hide the long-term cost of the plan; \$2 million on consultants to design the \$4-billion financial scheme; and \$500,000 for a lawyer to screen emails going to the Auditor General as she attempts to tell the people of Ontario just how bad this hydro scheme is for them.

Does the government plan to spend any more public money on a desperate attempt to convince voters that their hydro bills haven't gone up over 300% on the government's watch?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, a 25% reduction for all households in this province: That means rates are going down in this province.

But let's talk about the savings that this government has made by investing in a clean, green, reliable electricity system. When it comes to the health care system, there is \$4.3 billion in health care cost savings thanks to this government closing coal plants. That's \$70 billion that we're going to see by 2055. That is something we need to ensure that we keep doing, unlike the opposition parties, who have no plan or no idea on how to do this.

A 41% reduction in health care costs and 23% in health care deaths, thanks to the investments that we have made in this system: We're going to continue to be leaders in this country and in North America when it comes to our electricity grid, and making sure that it's clean, green, reliable and affordable.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. We learned last week in court that former cabinet secretary Peter Wallace told the Premier's chief of staff, "The only organization that didn't keep any records was a criminal organization." So I'm sure that it's only a coincidence that the government lawyered up this time when the Auditor General asked for what turned out to be two million emails from the energy ministry.

Speaker, why has the government only turned over 1%—actually, less than 1%—of the documents that the Auditor General has asked for from the government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to the documents asked for by the Auditor General, we are in full compliance. Since October 13, we've provided over 13,000 documents.

How did we get to that number? On top of all the other documents that all the other associations are getting to, we actually took the phrases that the Auditor General had asked for and recognized that there were 80 custodians of those phrases. That was 40 phrases. That produced two million documents. Those two million documents were then reviewed to make sure which ones applied specifically to this ask and what was close. That provided 145,000 documents.

The Ministry of Energy is working hard to go through all of those documents to provide all of them that relate to the fair hydro plan to the Auditor General. I know the opposition member knows this, and that's something we're going to continue to talk about, Mr. Speaker, because at the end of the day we are doing everything that we're supposed to do as a government to provide these documents to the Auditor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, the minister just talked about a lot of numbers. One thing we learned last week in the Auditor General's report is we can't believe a single number that this government brings forward any longer. All of their numbers are in a cloud of controversy.

The last time the government stalled and stalled and stalled on handing over the documents, do you remember how much that cost the taxpayers of Ontario? Over \$1 billion. We also got to learn about all kinds of neat things, like the secret code names they were using, like Project Vapour and Project Fruit Salad, and Pete's Project that was going on, and the infamous double-delete. How many secret codes are we going to find out about this time?

We know that the lawyers are in there deciding which documents they're going to turn over to the Auditor General. This latest electricity scheme is going to cost electricity customers in Ontario \$4 billion. Speaker, this time the government lawyered up first. What are they trying to hide from Ontario now?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It begs the question as to what they are trying to hide, when it comes to the fact that they keep talking about an idea that they may have had somewhere close to maybe a year ago that they might launch, and talk about a plan that they might have. I know the only number that we know is that we're getting closer and closer to 365 days before they would even talk about doing something for the people of Ontario.

This government, on the other hand, has provided another number that everyone knows: a 25% reduction on everyone's bills, from one side of our province to the other. Those who live in rural or northern parts of the province will see even more. At the end of the day, we're making sure that we're acting. We're acting for the people of Ontario with a clean system, an affordable system and a reliable system. That's a plan that you can count on, not like the opposition.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question to the Acting Premier: Two years ago the Premier insisted that a privatized Hydro One would not drive up hydro rates, because the Ontario Energy Board would keep it in check. We now know that Hydro One refuses to be regulated by the OEB. Even after the OEB gave it nearly everything it asked for, including 71% of a \$2.6-billion tax gift from that government, Hydro One is taking the OEB to court to demand 100% of that gift.

According to OEB precedent, this tax benefit should be going to ratepayers, not to shareholders. Why does the Premier think it's acceptable for Hydro One to demand 100% of this \$2.6-billion gift on behalf of investors while leaving nothing for ratepayers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the birthday boy, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the honourable member for the question, and I know we had this discussion last week as well. Really, when you're looking at Hydro One's draft rate order, what we're talking about now is an estimated bill impact for 2017 that would be an increase of 0.1%, and 0.2% for 2018.

That being said, our fair hydro plan has lowered bills by 25% on average for households and as many as half a million small businesses and farms this summer. I know our rural customers have seen an even greater decrease from this, somewhere between 40% and 50%. These are truly substantial savings.

We're going to continue to monitor this, but at the end of the day, we'll continue to work with all of our utilities to ensure that we continue to provide real, immediate relief for the families and businesses in our province.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: Last week, the government said that the system was working just fine because the OEB had told Hydro One to reduce its revenue demands. It turns out Hydro One basically ignored the OEB decision. The privatized Hydro One came back with a new revenue demand that was nearly as high as the first demand—and then it took the OEB to court.

Will the Acting Premier finally admit that Hydro One will not accept regulation by the Ontario Energy Board, and that the only way to stop private profits from driving up hydro bills is to return Hydro One to public hands?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, the OEB's decision is a great example of the strong record they have of denying hydro companies all that they ask for in reviewing rate applications, with the consumer in mind first and foremost.

Over the past 10 years, the OEB has denied or reduced the outcome of rate applications many times: in 2010, in

2012, in 2011 and in 2014—and in 2011, even, for example, with Toronto Hydro. They made a request to the OEB and received a 10.8% less-than-requested reduction. The OEB's mandate is to protect the interests of ratepayers and to set just and reasonable rates.

When it comes to the tax deferral piece, as the independent arm's-length regulator of the province, the OEB continues to balance the interests of consumers with those of the utilities. Part of the OEB's decision and order included the deferral tax issue. The OEB has indicated that some of the value of that tax asset should be given to ratepayers.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the minister responsible for accessibility, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles. Ontarians appreciate our government's work toward making Ontario more accessible. People of all abilities deserve to reach their social and economic potential by contributing their diverse skills and talents in the Ontario workplace. Unfortunately, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, many Ontario employers are still reluctant to hire people with disabilities, and yet nearly a third of Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses report having difficulty filling job vacancies.

Despite this, studies show that workers with disabilities are more loyal, have better attendance and in fact perform better than average on the job. As well, most workers with disabilities only require minor accommodations to work. A more diverse workforce including people with disabilities helps Ontario businesses with productivity, innovation and exports.

My question is this: Will the minister please explain what steps our government is taking to shift attitudes about accessibility and increase the participation of persons with disabilities in Ontario's workforce?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for this very important question.

This summer, I was very pleased to launch Access Talent: Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, and I was joined by many of my colleague ministers on this very important initiative.

Access Talent outlines our vision for the future: a province where everyone has a chance to reach their full potential and make a meaningful contribution to our economic prosperity and social growth. We're calling on employers to join us to take action and hire at least one more person with a disability and give people the opportunity to help further build their businesses and grow our economy. Our plan involves drawing from the knowledge and lived experiences from people across all sectors, including francophone communities, First Nations and indigenous people to reflect the diversity of people with disabilities.

I'll be pleased to answer more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. I think all of us appreciate your engagement on this portfolio.

One of the frustrations that I hear about as an MPP is how particular constituents are yet unable to find work because of the barriers they may face because of their own personal disabilities. The employment rate for people with disabilities is less than 50%, and a quarter of those employed feel they are working a role that does not really reflect the breadth of their qualifications. When we limit people's abilities as individuals, we limit our strength as a province.

Last month as part of Access Talent, the minister responsible for accessibility announced the new establishment of a new employers' partnership table to advise the government on innovative ways to connect people with disabilities to jobs and businesses to talent.

Speaker, would the minister please explain to the House how the new employers' table is going to advance employment for people with disabilities in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Our Employers' Partnership Table is a major step forward for Ontario's groundbreaking strategy to increase jobs for persons with disabilities. As business leaders and entrepreneurs, our partners know the importance of expanding their customer base to include persons with disabilities, while creating a workforce that reflects the diverse nature of their customers.

I want to thank the members who joined this partnership table. I was just telling my colleague to the left of me: These folks are not only meeting at scheduled times; they're exchanging emails. They really want to move the yardstick forward on this. They're going to advocate for hiring people with disabilities within their business circles and communities, influencing businesses and dispelling myths and misconceptions about employing people with disabilities. They have lots of professional expertise that they're bringing to the table—best practices.

It's initiatives like this, Speaker, that show that our government is creating meaningful and positive change, both socially and economically, in Ontario.

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health. Speaker, every day we read about the opioid crisis in Ontario and the many deaths resulting from overdoses. Police officers, who are often first to find those who have overdosed, run the risk of inadvertently ingesting illicit drugs during their duty, which places their lives at risk.

Back in October, the government announced the expansion of the supply of naloxone. Unfortunately, these first responders were ignored in the announcement. This has left many police services struggling to find the money to equip their officers with this life-saving treatment. It has created a two-tiered system in the province, where some officers have access to naloxone and others do not.

The opioid crisis has overtaken Ontario. We need leadership and support for our police officers throughout

the province. Will the minister ensure that a portion of the funds his government committed to the crisis helps police services purchase naloxone for their officers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want to speak to this issue in the supplementary, but I wanted to take the opportunity—since the member referenced appropriately the opioid crisis and the public health emergency that we're facing in this province, as well as across the country. I was at, last Thursday and Friday, the federal, provincial and territorial health ministers' meeting, where we had opportunity on both days to work together on the crisis and what more we could do collectively and nationally, looking particularly to the federal leadership at ways that they could work with us to make sure that those supports that are so badly needed by our harm reduction workers and at the front line, including safe injection services and including providing support to those, quite frankly, who are dying in incredible numbers and are extremely vulnerable and marginalized, so that we can provide the support that is needed.

It includes the provisions of naloxone. I think we're distributing in the order of 8,000 kits every single month through a whole myriad of opportunities.

Again, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want to address this specifically in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Police services have informed me that they have had to shift money in their budgets to try to provide naloxone to their officers. Unfortunately, this comes at a cost of other police services that keep our public safe.

This government has been too slow to act on this crisis, which has placed a heavy burden on police service budgets. Due to their lack of support, some regions of the province may not have access to naloxone for their police officers, putting the safety of both the public and the officers at risk.

Speaker, will the minister commit to expanding the availability of naloxone to include our front-line police officers throughout this province?

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

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thanks to the member opposite for the questions. I know that he, and I would say everyone in this House, is committed to ending the opioid crisis.

Several police services have outfitted their front-line officers with naloxone kits, and that includes a few in the member opposite's own riding, such as the Aylmer Police Service and the OPP, who have equipped all their front-line officers with life-saving naloxone.

Municipalities are, in the end, responsible for ensuring effective police services that meet their needs. As part of our strategy for a safer Ontario, we are moving forward towards an outcome-based funding model. Moving forward with this modernization, police services will have more funding for local priorities, like naloxone for police.

When the bill is introduced, I strongly encourage the member to support it with—

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

1120

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. On Friday, October 20, student leaders at eight Ontario colleges urged the government to get college administrators and striking faculty back to the bargaining table so that a negotiated settlement can be reached and 500,000 college students can return to their classrooms. My colleague Cindy Forster, the member for Welland, and I reinforced their call in an open letter to the Premier.

Students feel they are caught in the middle. They worry whether they will be able to complete their program requirements. Many are paying both tuition and rent and are understandably anxious about the financial burden they are carrying when their semester might be lost.

What is this Liberal government going to do to bring the parties back to the table so that a fair resolution can be achieved?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we share the member's concern, obviously, about the length of time that this strike has been ongoing. I perhaps have an interest here—maybe I have a conflict of interest. I have two sons, one at George Brown taking construction engineering and another at Centennial College taking HVAC. Both graduate this spring, so they too are anxious about what potential impacts this may have on their year.

There's no monopoly here on caring about the interests of these students. I think we all care equally. The best thing we can do at this stage is to urge both sides to stay at that bargaining table and get to a deal as soon as possible because there's no question that the time being taken impacts our students.

Mr. Speaker, maybe in the supplementary question the member can tell me: Is her party suggesting that now is the time for us to legislate them back? Is that what they're suggesting?

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Because that's the only tool we have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Acting Premier: Provincial underfunding of Ontario colleges has resulted in tuition fees increased to the maximum, ballooning class sizes and an explosion in the use of temporary, contract and part-time instructors, all of which puts quality of education at risk.

College student enrolment is at record highs, but full-time faculty have all but disappeared. Eighty per cent of faculty are precarious part-time workers with no job security and no benefits who must reapply for their jobs

every four months. This is not fair to students and it is not fair to faculty.

What is this Liberal government prepared to do to ensure a fair negotiated agreement that includes the resources necessary to implement equal pay for equal work in the college sector?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Actually, the NDP has been asking questions on a daily basis on this, and I understand the concern we all have for our students, but what are they suggesting we do? The alternative is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're strongly urging both sides to get to an agreement as soon as possible. That's in the interests of our students. But is the member suggesting that now's the time for us to legislate them back? If that's what you're suggesting, then come out and say it and stop hiding behind the rhetoric. There has been no government that has done more for the college system than ours.

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In my riding, I often hear from constituents on the work of this government on the energy file. The constituents of Durham know how critical a clean, reliable energy system is to Ontario being a great place to live and work. That's why the refurbishment of our nuclear fleet is so important to them. But recently—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: When he stands, you sit.

Just helping out, boss.

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

Finish, please.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Speaker—a news story that focused on the refurbishment's sub-projects cited cost overruns as a concern. Now my constituents are worried that the project might go over the set budget or will be delayed. They are worried because they know that the nuclear industry is not only a source of clean and safe energy, but that it also brings in substantial economic benefit to the region of Durham.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please update the House and my constituents on how the refurbished plant project is going?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank the member for that question and for all of the hard work he puts in every day for all of his constituents.

As I have said before, the refurbishment of the Darlington generating station remains on time and on budget. The news story mentioned by the member from Durham focuses on only one of about 500 small subprojects that make up the entire Darlington refurbishment program.

There is adequate contingency within the overall refurbishment project to fund any risks related to this sub-project. As Ontario Power Generation states in their Q2 refurbishment update, which you can now find on their website, they are now at the quarter-way point and remain on time and on budget.

The Darlington refurbishment project is a made-in-Canada initiative with 96% of related expenditures happening in Ontario. This means more investment into our already-booming economy. I want to assure the member from Durham and this House that the Darlington refurbishment remains on time and on budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. Since the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station is in the great riding of Durham, the economic and job creation benefits are well celebrated by my constituents. We are also very proud of the work that is being done at the Darlington generating station, which provides about 20% of the province's electricity needs, enough to serve a city of over two million people.

After six years of detailed planning and preparations, Ontario Power Generation has safely shut down the Unit 2 reactor at the Darlington nuclear station on October 15, 2016, initiating the refurbishment of the first of four units at the power plant. The refurbishment of Darlington will ensure we have safe, reliable, emission-free energy where it is needed.

Minister, it's my understanding that you are releasing the government's long-term energy plan later this week. Can you provide us with an update, specifically regarding the nuclear plant?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The member is correct in pointing out that refurbishment of Darlington and other nuclear generating stations in our province will generate economic benefits, Mr. Speaker. Refurbishing Ontario's nuclear capacity will create almost 25,000 jobs and generate annual economic activity of \$5 billion. Some 60 companies from across Ontario are contributing to the project. All told, it is estimated that the 10-year project, together with Darlington's—an additional 30 years of operation—will boost Ontario's GDP by almost \$90 billion and create an average of 14,200 new jobs each and every year over that same period.

This week, Mr. Speaker, our government will release the 2017 long-term energy plan, and I am pleased to say that it will take major steps towards delivering on the mandate letter objective by the Premier to me, namely, refurbishing the 10 nuclear units in Ontario both at Darlington and at Bruce.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. On September 7, the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph published their Planning for Tomorrow 2.0 report. This report found that the labour gap in the agri-food sector has grown from three jobs for every graduate

to four in just two short years. In fact, financial institutions have estimated that that gap is even higher in their sector.

Clearly, Speaker, under this minister's watch, this situation has eroded and is only getting worse. Does the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs not know about this report? But if he does, then why has he not taken action on my motion on growing agri-food careers?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for her question this morning. I think what it reflects is that the agriculture and agri-food sector of Ontario's economy is one of the fastest-growing sectors in Ontario today: \$37 billion, 800,000 people employed there and, of course, the Premier's target of 120,000 new jobs by the year 2020. We're on track to make that happen, with 59,000 new jobs created to date, which is putting demands, of course, on our labour supply.

We continue to work with all educational institutions across the province of Ontario to make sure that we have adequate human resources to drive this sector forward.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the minister: Unfortunately, I do not agree with what he just said. When the Premier was Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, yes, she challenged the industry to create 120,000 new jobs. They are nowhere near close to matching that number. They're not even close.

My growing agri-food careers motion is a good step in helping this sector meet that challenge, but over the last couple of years, we have not seen any action taken on this motion, which I might add received support from all parties. I've been meeting with a wide number of people including industry representatives, AgScape, OAC alumni, and they all share my concern that this motion has yet to be implemented.

Speaker, on behalf of our young people and the industry stakeholders and AgScape and OAC and their alumni: Will the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs do the right thing and get this motion implemented immediately?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for her supplementary question. I just wanted to provide this House with some information: Our government is partnering with the University of Guelph, investing more than \$7.5 million in graduate scholarships over the past decade through our Highly Qualified Personnel Scholarship Program and, again, working with my colleague the Minister of Education, we're now embarked upon a curriculum review. I know the minister wants to enshrine agriculture education into the curriculum to make sure we have adequate people for the fastest-growing sector in Ontario's economy today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, last week in Timmins, a 16-year-old boy with mental health needs had to be treated in the

emergency ward because there were no beds in that hospital to be able to treat him. This morning, we hear that there are eight new beds being announced in the city of Timmins, but that's cold comfort to patients who are continually having to be treated in the same way: getting hallway medicine rather than getting the bed that they need to be treated.

Minister, talk of how much money your government claims to have spent is cold comfort to patients and their families across Ontario who still don't have access to the health care they need, despite your claims to the contrary. No one, especially not a 16-year-old with so much life ahead of them, should suffer in today's Ontario because of the lack of access to proper health care.

When will this government admit that they're not doing enough to deal with this problem?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I'm not sure whether the member is appreciating the fact that eight new beds are being opened probably within the next two to four weeks in the Timmins hospital. I'm not sure if he's supportive of that or if he's not supportive of that.

I made an important announcement just over an hour ago, where we announced \$140 million available immediately to open up over 2,000 new hospital beds and spaces across this province—if there's anything that's going to deal with the challenge that the member opposite has expressed, it's that. So 1,200 new hospital beds opening, many, if not most, in the next two to four weeks; approximately 600 transitional care spaces for specialized care, including the Humber River Finch site of 150 beds—which that party appears to be opposed to; and 200 new supportive housing units specifically for seniors.

If that's not good news, I don't understand the nature of the context—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I will tell you what is not good news: when a government refuses to do something and only reacts when there's a crisis. Only when our leader lands in this House and asks question after question, members of this caucus, people across Ontario, hospital CEOs and others who have been saying for years, "You have underfunded the hospital system." You froze the budget for how many years?

So now because there's an election coming this spring, you're finally doing something and announcing beds in Timmins? Of course we're going to take them—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —but, Minister, you know it falls short of what needs to be done. Will you please now admit that there is a problem in our health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll let the question stand. Address your questions and your answers to the Chair, please.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, with this announcement we are opening the equivalent of six new medium-

sized hospitals in this province in this calendar year. I wonder if the member from Windsor—where we're opening 20 beds at Windsor Regional Hospital; or London Health Sciences, where we're opening 24 new acute beds and 24 acute mental health beds effective immediately; or Hamilton Health Sciences, where we're opening 30 new beds; or in Niagara at the Welland site, for the Welland member, 26 new beds; or at St. Joe's in downtown Hamilton, 24 new beds; or at Lakeridge in Oshawa—I wonder if the member from Oshawa is opposed to the 22 new beds there.

I know the member from Peterborough, on our side, is very happy that we're opening 20 new beds in Peterborough; and the member from Quinte, the fact that we're opening 15 beds there; or the 45 new beds in Ottawa; or the 36 new beds in Barrie at the Royal Vic.

I know it's good news on this side. I don't know why—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. On this side of the House we know how important it is to have a plan for the future, one that ensures Ontario can grow in this fast-changing, fiercely competitive global economy.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has been telling us for some time now about how important the information and communication technology sector is to Ontario. If you look at the numbers, Ontario truly has become a global leading innovation hub. Ontario is now the first in Canada and second in North America in the number of ICT establishments, behind only California. Ontario is now home to two of the largest start-up ecosystems in the world: Toronto and Waterloo.

We know that we've seen investment in the past from major companies like Google, Apple, IBM and Thomson Reuters. Can the minister please tell us about some of the more recent and exciting developments for Ontario's ICT sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: This government recognized quite early that the global economy was shifting, and we needed to be at the forefront of that change. We entirely restructured our Ministry of Economic Development and our economic development strategy. We needed to focus on investments that allow our start-ups to become scale-ups and our scale-ups to become globally competitive.

Just this week, we've seen two new exciting investments in Ontario's booming ICT sector. One example of that growth is Shopify, a homegrown e-commerce giant located in Ottawa and a company changing the face of retail. Last week, they announced a further expansion here in Ontario of 500 new jobs in Waterloo.

Another example is Sidewalk Labs, subsidiary of Google's parent company. After a global search, they decided the best place in the world for them to locate was here in Ontario. I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for answering my question. We know that Ontario's information and communication technology sector already directly employs about 280,000 people all across this province. Most of that employment is the result of our highly skilled talent that has been created right here in Ontario, and in Barrie at Georgian College. The sector relies on Ontario's 44 leading universities, which graduate thousands of STEM students per year. These are great numbers and allow us to compete right now.

But we know things are changing rapidly across the world, and in this competitive global environment, jurisdictions across the world are pulling out all stops to attract investment and lure talent. Can the minister please tell us about how we plan to ensure Ontario continues to be a leader in job creation and grow a strong, diverse economy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: No question, the member is absolutely right: Ontario is in a position of strength. We've added 800,000 net new jobs since the global recession. Our unemployment rate is at the lowest level we've seen in 17 years. Being in that position of strength gives us the ability to focus our attention on growing an innovative economy.

Last week we took another step in that direction. The member is also right: Our talent is the key to our future. So last week we announced that we're going to expand that talent pipeline. We're going to grow the number of STEM students in this province from 40,000 to 50,000 graduates every year, and over the next five years we're going to increase the annual graduations to 1,000 applied master's students in AI. That's going to make us stronger. We're going to keep growing, and we're very proud of those investments.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order, Speaker: In addition to my mother, my aunt, my niece and my in-laws being here, I've got 40 family members and friends from North Bay here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

The member from Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd be remiss not to welcome part of my constituency team. It's his first visit to Queen's Park and first question period. Nolan Hennin is here today, visiting for question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would also be remiss if I didn't welcome Neal Roberts, who is here with us. He's the executive director of the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs.

This evening is the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal ceremony, where the Lieutenant Governor will be presenting awards to 39 Ontario paramedics who have provided distinguished pre-hospital care to Ontarians for 30 years and for 40 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say that today my seatmate is celebrating a very important day. It's his birthday, and I would like us to say "happy birthday" to Glenn Thibeault, who is doing a fantastic job for the people of Sudbury.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: Some are here and more will be filing in, but I'd like to introduce Ken Gangasingh, Sotirios Hadjicosta, Myra Strzalka-Bernat, Heidi MacFarland, Behzad Malekzadeh, Alicia Micallef, Heather Cherron Von Atzingen, Totarie Correia, Laura Lunansky, Orlando Buonastella, Willy Noiles, Gary Randy McKibbon and Jeanette McKibbon. They're all here as part of an alliance of injured workers for a petition, because workers' compensation is a right. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SHABBAT PROJECT TORONTO

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise to tell everybody that this Thursday, October 26, the women of Toronto will join together and kick off yet again the Shabbat Project with the fourth annual community challah bake. Challah is that sweet bread that we eat on Sabbath and special holidays, and the rest of the year as well.

The Shabbat Project is just to get Jews together to observe a little bit of Shabbat. This year they're honouring Judy Feld Carr, who's a very celebrated, powerful woman in the community. Of course, she's a mother and a wife and a teacher, but what she's really known for is secretly saving over 3,000 Syrian Jews.

The evening will feature a hands-on workshop of braiding techniques, as well as allowing participants the experience of preparing two oven-ready challah loaves from scratch.

I'm inviting everybody to join hundreds of women and girls under one roof for an amazing evening of Jewish pride, creating unity and inspiration in the community with the poignancy of joint prayers and blessings. It will be Toronto's biggest challah bake. Everybody wants to see lots of people there, so go to shabbatprojecttoronto.com for more information. I actually went to a couple of these, Mr. Speaker, and I want you to imagine a room

with about 1,000 women at tables making challah bread, hearing from some speakers and listening to Israeli music in a huge banquet hall—lots of fun.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds fun. Further members' statements?

EVENTS IN WINDSOR–TECUMSEH

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "Love for all, hatred for none." That's the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. They've been practising their religion in Canada for 50 years, and last week they celebrated that anniversary in Windsor. I took part in a wonderful ceremony on the banks of the Detroit River. The Ahmadiyyan community donated a beautiful sculpture. Picture this, Speaker: four arms reaching to the sky, all different colours, and the hands are holding a huge globe on which is written, "Love for all, hatred for none." I wish to thank the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at for their excellent donation to our community.

I'd like, as well, to send anniversary greetings to some of our Unifor locals in the Windsor area. I joined members and retirees of Local 200 yesterday as they marked 75 years of working in our Ford plants, and I'll celebrate with Unifor Local 240 on Friday night at the Beach Grove Golf and Country Club. And Local 1498 just celebrated their 50th anniversary. Congratulations to all of our Unifor locals.

Finally, let me say how I'm hoping we'll soon see an end to the strike by faculty members at our community colleges. I spent some time last Friday on the picket lines in Windsor. This strike isn't about wages; it hinges on job security. Members of OPSEU want to see fewer part-time instructors. Another big issue is academic freedom. Instructors want to have a say in course development and how they teach the courses they design. Let's hope both sides return to the table in the next day or so.

DOUG WHITTY

Mr. James J. Bradley: Each year since 1956, during the annual grape and wine festival, an individual is chosen to serve as a national ambassador for Ontario's grape and wine producers, representing the industry at events across Canada. That person is known as the Grape King.

Doug Whitty, owner of Whitty Farms and the 13th Street Winery, was chosen as the 2017 Grape King. He was honoured with this title on September 13 of this year and appropriately crowned at the 13th Street Winery, greeted by enthusiastic applause by all attendees.

Doug and his family are excellent farmers and operators of the 13th Street Winery. The Whitty family farm was started by his grandfather in 1908 and is now producing 55 acres of vinifera wine grapes. Doug is second in the family to wear the crown.

His Fourth Avenue farm is the site of many community activities, including the Grapes of Wrath mud run supporting the Canadian Cancer Society's Wheels of Hope program.

As Farm Credit Canada's Trish Botter said, Doug Whitty's 13th Street operation helps elevate the entire Ontario grape and wine industry. His farm displays "exceptional quality, expertise and leadership in this industry."

To Doug and to Doug's family—of many years back and his present family—congratulations. A most appropriate choice.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise to share a positive story with my colleagues and to caution the government about policies that hurt small business.

Last month, I was pleased to visit Phoenix Building Components in Sundridge. Like their namesake, this business rose from the ashes of Kent Trusses, which shut down in August 2016 after 40 years. At its peak, Kent Trusses employed 100 people and was the largest employer in the village of Sundridge. When it closed, it threw 80 people out of work.

Phoenix, which is based in Barrie, Ontario, started building trusses in Sundridge again in April of this year, and once again employs 50 people. That may not sound like a big deal to some of my colleagues from city ridings, but in a community of less than 1,000 people, 50 jobs makes a huge difference to the whole community. I want to thank Grant Gibbons, president and CEO of Phoenix, for his company's investments in Sundridge.

When I visited Phoenix in September, it was great to see people at work and trucks delivering lumber and picking up trusses. But Andy Forsayeth, operations manager, told me that between hydro rates and other government policies, it is a struggle to restart a business in Ontario right now. Communities like Sundridge need businesses like Phoenix, so I ask this government to find policies that will help businesses and small communities succeed.

I've recently heard from small employers around Parry Sound–Muskoka about proposed labour changes in Bill 148. I hope that this government will do another round of real consultation on Bill 148 and actually listen to the small employers around Ontario.

WORLD POLIO DAY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: October 24 is World Polio Day, and I want to highlight the vital work of Rotarians across our communities as they work to eradicate polio from the face of the earth.

Polio is a crippling childhood disease that is terribly infectious and leads to paralysis, and sometimes death. During the first half of the 20th century, polio crippled over half a million people every year. There is no cure, but there is a preventive vaccine. For as little as 60 cents' worth of vaccine, a child can be protected against this disease for life.

In 1985, Rotary International and its partners launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and the incidence of polio has plummeted from about 350,000 children

paralyzed every year to fewer than a dozen confirmed cases so far by September of this year.

Thanks in large part to Rotary International and to the 1.2 million Rotary members worldwide, including the 10 Durham region Rotary Clubs and our two in Oshawa, polio will soon be just a memory.

The world is 99.9% polio-free, but the fight to end polio is not over.

This World Polio Day, the CN Tower in Toronto will be lit red and yellow, and across communities, Rotarians will be recognized with proclamations and events.

Polio could be the first human disease of the 21st century to be eradicated, because of the successful engagement of over 200 countries and 20 million volunteers. Go online to www.endpolio.org to support.

Thank you to the Oshawa Rotary Club and the Oshawa-Parkwood Rotary Club for their work across our city.

This World Polio Day, we thank Rotary Clubs across all communities for their ongoing service and commitment to end polio in our world.

ROHINGYA MUSLIMS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise today to talk about the Rohingya Muslims who are fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar.

Since August, more than half a million men, women and children have had to flee their homes to make the punishing journey for refuge in Bangladesh. These numbers will rise. The United Nations confirms the Rohingya are facing ethnic cleansing. Hundreds have already been murdered, and those who have been spared, including young children, have watched their villages burn to the ground. The New York Times recently described soldiers tearing babies from their mothers' arms and throwing them into the fire, boys being beheaded and girls being gang-raped, among many other horrors.

1310

I am proud that Canada so often calls out transgressions against humanity. That's why I believe that we must recognize and condemn this violence.

Shortly, I will be presenting a petition that calls for us to acknowledge the violence in Myanmar. I am so proud of those members of my riding of Kingston and the Islands and the effort spearheaded by Zerman Khan, who is here with us along with his family today in the gallery—for putting this petition together.

In closing, we've heard these crimes be described as "unimaginable," but they are imaginable and we do know they're going on. The cries of those experiencing this depraved persecution in Myanmar must not be ignored.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is widely acknowledged that industrial wind turbine projects are an expensive and environmentally damaging way to generate electricity. I've long called for a moratorium on turbines and an end to the disastrous Green Energy Act. Yet a new project is

under way less than one kilometre from the suburban streets of Wallaceburg, along the banks of Otter Creek. This project threatens some of the best agricultural land in our country—land which, after the construction of industrial turbines, will never grow food again. I'm surprised that the Minister of Agriculture raises no questions.

This is an environmentally sensitive area, home to 24 species at risk and within a major flight path for migratory birds. I'm amazed that the Minister of Natural Resources raises no objections.

The Otter Creek development will require the foundations of its enormous towers to be supported by steel pilings driven into bedrock. This bedrock includes a band of Kettle Point black shale which carries water of the aquifer and fills the wells of my constituents. With 14 wells already rendered undrinkable in north Kent, there are legitimate concerns about this project's impact on water quality. I'm astounded that the Minister of the Environment won't take these concerns seriously.

On Thursday, October 26, the newly formed Wallaceburg Area Wind Concerns group will host a public meeting at 7 p.m. in the UAW Hall in Wallaceburg. I will be there. I invite any concerned minister of this government to join me.

SOMALI COMMUNITY

Mr. John Fraser: It's been about a week since we heard of the horrible attack in Mogadishu where over 300 people died and 300 or more were injured. I know that we had an opportunity earlier this last week to observe a moment of silence here in the Legislature, and I know that all members of the Legislature stand with Ontario's and Canada's Somali community in grieving and mourning and condemning this horrendous attack.

I want to say a few words about the Somali community in my riding of Ottawa South and in Ottawa. Over the last week, it's been incredible to see how everyone has come together. Last Thursday, they held a vigil on Parliament Hill. Just recently, I was honoured and privileged to attend an event, Stand With Mogadishu. The theme of the event was solidarity. It is really quite incredible—the generosity, the thoughtfulness and the solidarity of the community around this really horrible incident. There are families who have family members who died or who were injured. Yesterday, they were able to raise, beyond their goal—this is in the community of Ottawa—\$100,000. That's really quite incredible.

I want to thank all the organizers, all the people who were involved, the volunteers, all the donors who came together in a little bit more than a week to put this together for their commitment, not only to the broader global community but to their own community of Ottawa South.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Last week, this government chose once again to use strong-arm tactics and cancelled two

days of scheduled public hearings for Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. After promising to keep those with concerns informed, the government went ahead and cancelled two days of hearings, effectively silencing citizens and organizations.

The Lake Erie North Shore Landowners Association from my riding is just one of those many organizations that did not get a chance to voice their concerns. LENSLA, the Lake Erie North Shore Landowners Association, was founded in January 2016, and it represents landowners from Elgin county's northern Lake Erie shoreline, and boasts local agriculture producers, professionals, academics and retirees among its membership, and has a combined property valuation of over \$34 million.

LENSLA has been effective in compelling local conservation authorities, municipalities and diverse stakeholders to examine their governance, public policy approaches, and duty to adhere to the principles of public accountability.

It's also unfortunate that the water resources section of the natural resources conservation policy branch was not interested in engaging this group in further serious dialogue.

The Lake Erie North Shore Landowners Association wishes to underscore that the Conservation Authorities Act must be grounded on the guiding principle of affording citizens the right of due process at all levels: within governance, financing, stakeholder relations, authorities' enforcement powers with respect to provincial offences, permit processes, and the rights to administrative review and procedural fairness.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this government will change its mind and reach out to these local organizations and make Bill 139 the best it can be for the province.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

Minister.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), Mr. Rinaldi and Madame Des Rosiers exchange places such that Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item number 4 and Madame Des Rosiers assumes ballot item number 5; and that the requirement for notice be waived for ballot item number 4.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.
Agreed? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding changes to the memberships of standing committees.

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

Minister.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the following committee: that on the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Miss Monique Taylor replaces Mr. Jagmeet Singh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that the following change be made to the—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the Ontario government needs to strengthen primary care as the foundation of the health care system to achieve health system transformation goals of Patients First; and

“Whereas research shows that interprofessional primary health care delivers better outcomes for people and better value for money; and

“Whereas an investment in primary care will help address recruitment and retention challenges, build strong interprofessional primary care teams and ensure high-quality people-centred primary health care delivery in Ontario; and

“Whereas over 7,500 staff in over 400 community health centres, family health teams, aboriginal health access centres and nurse practitioner-led clinics are being paid below rates recommended in 2012 and as a result are facing challenges recruiting and retaining health providers, including chiropodists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, health promoters, occupational therapists, psychologists, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, mental health and social workers, physician assistants, managers and administration;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in interprofessional primary

health care teams with a commitment of \$130 million annualized, with an implementation plan over two years, to ensure interprofessional primary health care teams can effectively retain and recruit staff.”

I support it, affix my name and send it up with page Swetlana.

1320

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been signed by 16,000 people, and it comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

“Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario’s hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and, there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer’s or dementia;

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents’ increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer’s;

“Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

“Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner’s inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province’s long-term-care homes in 2003 but in” 2017 “they have yet to make good on their promise;

“Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;...”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day...;

“(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard...;

“(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

“(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

“(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to

end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes.”

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

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I’m delighted to have a petition here put together by the Injured Workers’ Consultants.

“Workers’ Comp Is a Right....”

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas, over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

—Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

—Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

—Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I fully agree with this petition and leave it with Alexander to take to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’d just like to say to all our guests, we’re delighted to have you here, but you can’t applaud the members who are making speeches in the Legislature.

I apologize. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STUDENT LOANS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to eliminate interest from Ontario student loans.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“Whereas the Liberal government should not be profiting from student loans in Ontario;

“Whereas Ontario is the most expensive province in which to access post-secondary education;

“Whereas the average debt load for university students after four years is \$28,000 and the average debt load for anyone with post-graduate experience is \$35,000;

“Whereas the Ontario government made more than \$25 million in profit from interest on student loans last year alone;

“Whereas seemingly insurmountable student debt delays important life milestones for young people, placing a burden on both graduates with debt and on the provincial economy as a whole;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” to “immediately eliminate interest from student loans.”

Speaker, I support this. I’ll sign my name and send it with page Colin to the table.

ROHINGYA MUSLIMS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current state of despair experienced by the Muslims in Rohingya is such that they remain stateless without any citizenship, and are left to face continued persecution;

“The United Nations has stated that these Muslims are ‘facing ethnic cleansing’ and since late August of 2017, the attacks on their villages have forced more than

400,000 residents to now be displaced, with thousands more stuck with nowhere to go and hundreds upon hundreds that are now dead;

“Canada has always been recognized as a nation that is at the forefront of calling out any transgression against humanity and has remained steadfast with this belief, hence the cries of Muslims experiencing persecution in Rohingya cannot go unanswered and must be heard loud and clear to ensure that peace is brought to Rohingya;

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

“To recognize and bring forward to our federal government a formal request to lead the charge with opening formal dialogue in Myanmar, also known as Burma, to finally resolve this gross miscarriage of justice for the people of Rohingya who have been in flux since the Second World War.”

I agree with this petition. I sign it and I give it to page Ryan.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services’ Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I’ll send it with page Abigail.

PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai reçu cette pétition de M^{me} Francine Pinard de Garson dans le Nickel Belt.

« Au cours des 10 dernières années en Ontario, 86 % de tous les films montrant des fumeurs étaient accessibles aux jeunes.

« Le fait que l’industrie du tabac se sert depuis longtemps du grand écran pour promouvoir l’usage du tabac est bien documenté.

« Selon un rapport scientifique rendu public par l’Unité de recherche sur le tabac de l’Ontario, environ 185 000 enfants de l’Ontario commenceront à fumer après avoir vu des personnages fumer dans des films.

« Plus de 59 000 fumeurs ainsi recrutés finiront par mourir d’un cancer, d’un AVC, d’une maladie du cœur ou d’emphysème liés à l’usage du tabac, lesquels entraîneront des coûts de soins de santé de l’ordre d’au moins 1,1 milliard de dollars. Et attendu que le fait de

classer dans la catégorie 18A (adultes) les films qui font la promotion de l’usage du tabac en Ontario permettrait de sauver au moins 30 000 vies...

« Le gouvernement de l’Ontario s’est fixé comme objectif d’atteindre le taux de tabagisme le plus faible au Canada.

« 79 % ... des Ontariens et Ontariennes appuient l’interdiction de l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories G, PG, 14A...»

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Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative :

« Que le Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux examine les façons dont on pourrait modifier la Loi sur le classement des films pour réduire l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories qui conviennent aux enfants et aux adolescents et diffusés en Ontario;

« Que le comité donne un compte rendu de ses constatations à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario et que la ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs prépare une réponse. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Max de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that’s addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

“Whereas podiatrists treat foot pain and deformities in women twice as often as foot disabilities in men, often due to having to wear high heels in their workplaces;

“Whereas Ontario podiatrists see far too many patients with injuries in the workplace that are entirely avoidable and are caused by wearing footwear that is inappropriate or outright unsafe;

“Whereas clinical evidence demonstrates that wearing high-heeled shoes causes a much higher incidence of bunions, musculoskeletal pain and injury than those who do not wear high heels;

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

“To put their best foot forward, and take swift action to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from dress codes that mandate unsafe footwear in the workplace.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition. I will send it down with page Alexander.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition entitled “Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians.”

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this and I send it to the table with page Colin.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I’m delighted to read this petition in support of Bill 109.

“Whereas we’ve seen rapid growth of vertical communities across Ontario; and

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

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

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

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

“Urge the Ontario Legislature to support Bill 109, the Reliable Elevators Act, 2017, that requires the repairs of elevators to be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge the Legislature to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity–Spadina and across Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and leave it with Jebreel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Naqvi moved third 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the Attorney General to lead off the debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Boozhoo. Shekoli. Bonzhoor. Tawnshi. Tunngasugitsi.

Speaker, I wish to begin by acknowledging the land on which we are gathered here today. Indigenous people are migratory people. At the time of contact with European people, the Anishnawbe and the Haudenosaunee people called this part of Ontario, around what is now known as Lake Ontario, their home. I would like to honour and recognize the treaty land of this area to have cultural and historical significance to both the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation as well as the Haudenosaunee.

I very much look forward to hearing other members speak on this very important bill, and of course, members from our caucus will be speaking as well.

I rise today to begin third reading of the proposed Representation Statute Law Amendment Act. This is an important piece of legislation that would, if passed, help to ensure a strong voice for northern Ontarians in the provincial Legislature.

The north is a vital part of our province, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs will go into detail later on, both in terms of its distinctive culture and as an important driver of our province’s economy. It has made Ontario a global leader in the resource and mining sector which supports tens of thousands of jobs. But effective representation in our government remains a real and persistent issue for northern residents and their representatives alike. We often hear from people in remote northern communities who feel they just don’t have a voice here at Queen’s Park. We all know that northern communities bring important, cultural, economic and historical perspectives to key issues, whether we are talking about

where schools and hospitals should be built, or what opportunities we should pursue to create jobs and make investments in the future. These voices need to be heard in our provincial Legislature.

As the members here can certainly appreciate, every riding, and in fact every community, has its own set of unique needs. And of course, northern Ontario is no exception. Over the past few weeks, we have discussed at length these unique challenges in debates and in committee meetings, a major one being the enormous size of the two current ridings in the Far North. The ridings I'm referring to are Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. They are the largest, geographically speaking, in the province, and are larger, in fact, than many European countries.

We have heard from the members who represent those ridings. While they do an incredible job of staying in touch with their constituents, I know that it is not easy. In my own riding of Ottawa Centre, if one of my constituents wants to chat, it won't take them too long to find me. It's easy to sort of zip around in my riding and in a day I can be pretty much in all the four corners of my community—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So will I.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: But up north, it's not that easy, and I've heard the member from Timmins–James Bay on some of those challenges.

As I mentioned, Speaker, it can take a full day just to travel from one part of these ridings to another. And I'm sure my colleagues would agree that for people living in Sandy Lake or Peawanuck, Queen's Park must seem like an incredibly distant, out-of-reach place. In addition to the expansive size, these regions contain a true multitude of people, cultures and traditions. That includes many distinct and important communities, including indigenous peoples and people belonging to the francophone community.

We appreciate that the priorities and concerns of these communities may be different from other ridings in the province. These challenges are what make effective representation in the Far North even more difficult and important. These communities deserve to have representatives that advocate for their specific needs.

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Our government is, and has always been, committed to representation across the province. Back in 2004, if you recall, Speaker, the federal government reduced the number of federal seats in northern Ontario from 11 to 10. We disagreed with that decision, and Ontario responded by preserving 11 northern ridings.

First of all, as I have already said, I don't believe that fair and effective representation can be calculated through a simple population count. There is a multitude of factors that must be considered, and the only sure way to account for those is to give the people a voice in the process.

As I mentioned, it is important to think about the diversity of the communities in northern Ontario and how, despite population considerations, there are issues

that can complicate representation for certain communities. With this in mind, we continued to think about how we could further improve representation in the north.

Last year, Speaker, as you know, as we prepared to introduce a range of measures to modernize and improve our electoral processes, we saw another opportunity to address the important and long-standing issue of representation in the Far North. We recognized that it would be no easy task. Changes would have to be made carefully, and independently of any political party.

That is why we created the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, an independent commission with the mandate to research, consult with communities and make recommendations on the creation of at least one and no more than two new ridings in Ontario's Far North. An independent, non-partisan commission was absolutely the best way to go. It ensured that the process was fair, impartial and focused on local needs.

Before I continue, I would like to highlight a distinctive feature of the commission, and that is that the majority of its members come from indigenous backgrounds. This was a perspective that I am glad played a prominent role in their research and discussions.

I would like to, again, thank and acknowledge the members, including the Honourable Justice Joyce Pelletier, of the Ontario Court of Justice, who chaired the commission. In addition to her professional qualifications, she provided an important perspective, as she is of Ojibway heritage, from Fort William First Nation.

Greg Essensa, who is the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario, was part of the commission, as was Michael Pal, an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa, who specializes in the areas of electoral and constitutional law.

In addition, we had Theresa Hall, who is not only a former justice of the peace but also a former chief of Attawapiskat First Nation—Theresa is of Mushkegowuk heritage, from the Attawapiskat First Nation—and Eric Fisher, who is also a former chief and was a council member of Wabaseemoong White Dog Independent Nations. He is of Ojibway heritage.

The commission was tasked specifically with looking at electoral boundaries in Ontario's two northernmost districts, Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay, and to make sure that any changes would directly reflect the priorities and needs of the people living in the affected areas.

As you will recall, in May, the independent Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission took on the challenge of reaching out to people far and wide across the north. Throughout the spring, the commissioners travelled to remote and urban areas across the Far North to hear what people had to say about their representation at Queen's Park. The overwhelming consensus the commissioners heard was to create two additional ridings in the Far North, for a total of four where previously there were only two. As I mentioned earlier, the needs of communities in the Far North vary across such a vast geography. The commissioners heard this in their consultations as

well. After careful consideration, they recommended this approach in their final report.

Each commissioner provided a depth of experience and understanding that was invaluable to this review and the discussions they held with people across the Far North. I'm confident in the work and the advice they have provided to this Legislature.

In view of this good work, as well as the obligation of the government to introduce legislation to implement the commission's recommendations, this bill, if passed, would make the recommendations in their final report a reality.

I believe that all parties in the House should be proud of the work they have done to bring the bill to where it is today. The input of members, including those from the north, has been invaluable, and I would like to thank them for their insight.

As you know, the legislative committee recently travelled to Moose Factory, where it heard from community members and indigenous leaders on the proposed changes. During the legislative process, we heard some concerns that I would like to take a moment to address.

At the recent public hearing in Moose Factory, a number of indigenous leaders voiced concerns regarding the name of one of the proposed ridings. In particular, indigenous leaders raised some concerns regarding the use of the name "Mushkegowuk" for the new north-eastern riding. In response, we are proposing to consult further with affected communities and report any recommendations regarding the new riding name to the Legislature. This is to ensure that the name of this riding best represents the people who live there.

Pending this consultation, the legislation refers to this riding as Mushkegowuk–James Bay. This is an interim measure. Again, we will be conducting a review of the name in consultation with the communities and reporting back to this House.

Splitting the Far North into four smaller, separate ridings would go a long way to representing the unique interests of Ontario's Far North. The new ridings of Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk–James Bay would have a majority indigenous and a majority francophone population, respectively. The new riding of Kiiwetinoong would have a 68% indigenous population. Mushkegowuk–James Bay's population would also include significant portions of both indigenous and francophone populations, as it would be comprised of about 27% indigenous people and about 60% francophone communities. As such, the representatives of these new ridings could advocate on behalf of those interests and bring these important perspectives to Queen's Park. These new ridings will help ensure that the Far North has a stronger, more distinct voice in the Legislature.

As I mentioned earlier, there will also be a new riding of Kenora–Rainy River. The boundaries of the former Kenora–Rainy River riding would be adjusted to include places such as Dryden, Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River. The more northerly parts of the former riding will be included in Kiiwetinoong.

The city of Timmins will become its own separate riding. As we all know, urban interests are very different from those of more remote communities. As a stand-alone riding, the urban interests of the city of Timmins would be represented independently from other, more remote communities in the Far North, such as those included in Muskegowuk–James Bay. These smaller, more manageable ridings will make it possible for northern MPPs to more effectively reach and represent their constituents at Queen's Park.

Speaker, I would also like to take a few moments to speak to some of the other measures we are proposing in this bill, which clarify previous changes to the rules and processes around our elections.

As you will recall, last year we transformed the province's election financing rules to make Ontario's system among the strongest and most transparent in Canada. The legislation we passed included new rules about who can make contributions and how much they can donate, as well as created new restrictions on attendance at fundraisers for prescribed political actors.

The bill before you seeks to further refine the rules restricting political actors from attending fundraising events. We are looking to provide clarity on what activities the rules are seeking to restrict and to whom they apply.

We are making three changes. First, under the current rules, prescribed political actors are restricted from attending ticketed fundraising events. The intent of these restrictions is to prevent cash-for-access arrangements.

Through the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer, we recognize that there are some meetings that are unintentionally captured by the current attendance restrictions because they include a contribution portion in the ticket price but are not primarily fundraisers. These are meetings like policy conferences that are held by political parties and their constituency associations, and help to contribute to healthy democratic participation.

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If passed, this bill would allow these prescribed political actors to attend these specific meetings. These meetings are important opportunities for politicians to meet with and to be held accountable by the people they represent, or would like to represent, in the Legislative Assembly, and they give political actors the chance to engage in policy discussions that impact their communities.

Under the proposed rules, prescribed political actors would be permitted to attend these annual general meetings and policy conferences only if the meeting is a cost-recovery event and has been advertised as such. All funds raised in excess of cost recovery must go to the Chief Electoral Officer.

We are also making a second change that would permit prescribed political actors to attend ticketed cost-recovery events only if those events have been advertised as cost-recovery events. This is a tidying of the rules to ensure that cost-recovery events are advertised in advance as such. Otherwise, prescribed political actors would not be allowed to attend.

Finally, this bill would make one additional change to the new fundraising rules by closing a small loophole. As the members will recall, under the rules that were passed last year, both nomination contestants and registered candidates are restricted from attending fundraising events. It seemed simple enough, but there is a complication. As it turns out, the bill did not account for the gap period that sometimes exists between the time that a nomination has been won and the time a person becomes an official candidate when the writ is issued. By closing this gap, we would ensure that the policy goal of banning cash-for-access is applied to people through all stages of seeking office, which, of course, was the goal of our legislation in the first place.

I would like to highlight that since this bill was introduced, we have refined the original time period that was proposed to capture contestants nominated or appointed before nomination contestant rules first applied on July 1, 2017.

In his written submission to the standing committee last month, the Chief Electoral Officer suggested that the proposed time period, which began on January 1, 2017, was too narrow. For example, it did not capture contestants who could have been nominated in 2016 for the upcoming 2018 election. So we put forward a motion so that it applies to, and captures, anybody nominated or appointed between March 1, 2016, and July 1, 2017.

Speaker, you ask: Why March 1? This is because March 1, 2016, was the first day that new constituency associations could be created for the electoral map that will be used for the 2018 scheduled election.

As the members here can certainly appreciate, running a nomination campaign can be costly. Under the current legislation, nomination contestants have until the day of the nomination vote to receive contributions. This does not always allow them enough time to pay off debts from the nomination contest. So we are proposing to extend the period during which nomination contestants can fundraise to pay off outstanding campaign debt. This change treats nomination contestants similarly to candidates by permitting them to receive contributions for three months after the vote.

Finally, I would like to speak about the amendment we are proposing to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to share information with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., or MPAC for short. As the members know, MPAC is responsible for assembling the voters lists that are used in Ontario's municipal elections. If passed, this bill would modernize our election processes by allowing data from the permanent register of electors to be shared with MPAC for electoral purposes. This is a quick and effective way to provide MPAC with more accurate voters lists in time for the 2018 municipal elections, making it easier for voters to get the information they need to participate in municipal elections. It would also ensure that we maximize the benefits from all the great work that Elections Ontario does to keep current and accurate voter rolls.

Speaker, the bill before you today is an important step forward for representation in northern Ontario and for

our elections system. We know that the needs and the interests of northern Ontario communities are complex, and with this bill, we are making no claim to having solved everything. But should this legislation pass, it will bring us one step closer to strengthening the faith northerners have in their representation right here at Queen's Park.

Taken together with other recent reforms we have made, like, for example, increasing ridings in southern Ontario to improve representation; encouraging more young people to participate in elections by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote; making it easier for voters to get to polling stations by moving the scheduled election date from the fall to the spring, to take advantage of the longer daylight hours and warm weather; and allowing for the use of electronic vote tabulators at voting stations, so that votes can be counted more quickly and accurately, these changes will help to build a more modern and more representative election system.

When we get to election day, I know that voters across the Far North will experience first-hand the positive changes that we are proposing through this legislation.

Speaker, I sincerely hope that all members will support this important bill. Thank you. Meegwetch. Yaw^ko. Marsee. Nakurmiik.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I look forward to this next hour, to talk to you a little bit about our findings, first of all from the tour that we took of Moosonee and Moose Factory, as well as from the general government committee, that came back and met; to talk a little bit about what we learned from the committee in the time we were in Moose Factory; and then to talk about our amendments that were made, and what we did or didn't do throughout those amendments.

In my personal opinion and, I think, the opinion of our party, we're rather disappointed, and I think that would be putting it lightly.

We heard just a moment ago what the minister said. He said that "voices need to be heard." That's how he started this: Voices need to be heard. We went there, and we heard the voices, but the government didn't listen. What they asked for, what they were so explicit about in terms of the presentations that we had—it was as if they were talking to somebody else, not the government, because the government returned to Toronto and developed some amendments that made absolutely no sense, compared to what we heard in the hearings.

I can tell you, Speaker, that we agree with the concept that there are two new ridings that are to be created. We understand why they're being created. We believe in that process of the creation of these ridings.

But we wanted to hear from the people in the Mushkegowuk riding. We wanted to hear from them, and hopefully get a better understanding of what it is that they wanted us to do on their behalf. And boy, Speaker, we got it with both barrels.

The Kiiwetinoong riding, which will be in north-western Ontario, is going to be 68% indigenous. The Mushkegowuk riding, on the James Bay coast, will include Hearst, Kapuskasing and others, and will be 60% francophone and 20% indigenous.

They talk about how “Kiiwetinoong” is the Ojibway word for “north,” and “Mushkegowuk”—I’m reading from the government’s news release—can be translated into English to mean “people of the swampland.” So we’re talking about two indigenous names, except, to hear it from the grand chiefs, as we did, the Mushkegowuk riding is not an indigenous riding, in their own words. They were quite shocked and quite surprised.

1400

In fact, because they’re going to name the riding Mushkegowuk—one of the grand chiefs said they’re flattered at the name being used, but they’re very surprised, because they were not asked if it could be used, and it doesn’t actually represent that area. It represents the area outside of Timmins, as well, Hearst and Kapuskasing, and as I said, it is 60% francophone and 27% indigenous.

During the hearings, we heard very loudly and very clearly from two grand chiefs and a chief, as well as private citizens who said that using the name is “misleading.” This is what the grand chiefs told our committee: using the name “Mushkegowuk” for the new riding is misleading. I don’t want to paraphrase, but certainly throughout all the documentation we received from the grand chiefs, the chiefs and the private citizens—I can read one example from Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon:

“The name ‘Mushkegowuk’ must not be used for one of the proposed new ridings in the James Bay region.” This is from the grand chiefs, both of them. They go on to say, “The Mushkegowuk Council and NAN must be allowed to submit suggestions for an alternative and more appropriate name.” This is what they’re asking us. They have gone out of their way to ask us that.

We sat for hours in front of the grand chiefs. They had about half an hour to speak and answer some of our questions, each. There was one underlying theme throughout the entire day, which to me was the purpose of going to Moose Factory: to listen to them. In this case we listened to the grand chiefs especially, who were very, very clear, over and over, that they were not consulted. They told us that—not in so many words; they told us in those exact words. They were not consulted on the name, and they certainly found offence—again, their words—in the fact that the name was being used without their prior knowledge or their approval. They termed it “misleading.” This is what we heard from them.

They didn’t like what they saw, they didn’t like what they read, and they certainly didn’t like what they heard. Again, they said they were certainly flattered by the name. I’m reading from the notes that I wrote. They told us that there was no consultation. They did not see a draft. They only saw the final report.

Of course, the commissioners had a tight schedule. Well, the chiefs, too, were busy at the time. They talked

to us about a trust issue. They said they found a lack of trust. They told us that they questioned the validity—I’m shocked, by the way, Speaker; these are some pretty harsh words that we heard—of the commission’s report. Again, I’m not disagreeing with anything they had to say. We went there to hear what they had to say. It’s what we did with this information that is most surprising, Speaker. So I’m going to continue for a bit, talking about what we heard from them. We absorbed all these notes from them, the mistrust; in their words, the “misleading.” They said, “This sounds as if” that you’re saying to them, “we know what’s best for you.” This is what they found to be offensive.

So we brought an amendment that I believe and that our party believes respects what we heard from the Mushkegowuk Council. I believe and we believe that this motion, the amendment that we brought, respects the wishes of the Mushkegowuk Council and others, NAN included. I’ll talk about our amendment in a minute.

But what I’m so shocked at is the amendment that the government brought. I’ll read you that amendment because it’s so surprising that they brought this amendment. The government, in the first government motion—“The Attorney General shall undertake a review of the name ... Mushkegowuk–James Bay electoral district....” This is what the government came away with.

They’re telling you as plainly as can be that they don’t want you to use the name “Mushkegowuk” in a riding that has nothing to do with Mushkegowuk. They told us that, over and over and over. For hours, we heard that. And what does the government do? I’m expecting they’re going to come back with an amendment that says, as the Attorney General said, “Voices need to be heard.” Well, we heard them, but they didn’t do anything about it. In fact, they’ve added insult to injury here, Speaker. They just expanded the name to Mushkegowuk–James Bay. This is their bright idea. It’s as if they were in a different room than the rest of us were in, for them to bring this—I’ll compare that with what our amendment was, which I fully expected the government would have (a) brought and (b) passed. Ours is:

“Mushkegowuk electoral district

“(4) Despite the provisions of this or any other act, the name of the northern electoral district identified in the schedule as ‘Mushkegowuk’ shall instead have a different name to be prescribed in a regulation made under this act by the Chief Electoral Officer....

“(5) Subsection (4) does not apply if the Mushkegowuk Council provides the Chief Electoral Officer with written consent for the use of the name ‘Mushkegowuk’.”

So here we’re saying, “Look, we heard you. You told us that you do not want that name.” In fact, they went so far as to say—Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon, who represents seven of the First Nation areas and bands, tells us that, yes, the province wants to make significant changes:

Whereas the changes include “the lands and communities of the Mushkegowuk people; and....

“Whereas the new proposed riding, to be called Mushkegowuk, misses the opportunity to create a riding that

would give the Omushkego an electoral population base for real participation ... and thus misses an opportunity to move towards reconciliation, and fails to recognize the self-government that the Mushkegowuk people have exercised from time immemorial, and which was recognized in the oral promises of Treaty 9....”

They go on to say that “the proposed riding actually reduces the percentage representation of the Omushkego ... as compared to the existing (inadequate riding), and therefore is a step backward rather than forward....” They’re telling us, as plain as you can hear, that they don’t like what we’re doing, Speaker.

1410

“Therefore be it resolved”—this, again, is from Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon, representing the seven bands—“that this 2017 annual assembly of the chiefs and delegates of the Mushkegowuk people urges that the presently proposed new Mushkegowuk electoral riding not proceed, and that before any electoral riding changes are made”—I’m reading from his letter to the committee—“real consultations take place in Mushkegowuk territory, and that a riding be considered and implemented which respects the Omushkego in our ancestral homelands, and ensures the likelihood of the real Omushkego representation in the Ontario Legislature in the future.”

They’re very simple. So we asked him, “Look, just in plain language, tell us: How long will it take to do this?” And he said, “Three months is not enough. It might take six months to a year.” But we said, “But this is going to happen in October—maybe November. There’s not enough time.” And they told us that they would rather wait out another four years than proceed with it in this way. This is what the advice was from the grand chiefs. They said, “We want you to go back to the drawing board.” That was the advice from the grand chief representing seven of the—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Did they listen?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No, member from Timmins—James Bay, you know as well as I do that this government did not listen. Instead, they bring out that motion, an amendment—they expanded the name; they added insult to injury. They did not remove the name “Mushkegowuk”; they just added another phrase to it: “James Bay.”

I’d like to read a few more quotes from the hearing. These are quotes. These are from the Standing Committee on General Government, the Hansard copy.

We heard that using the name “Mushkegowuk” was “alarming” to the chiefs. We also heard, as I said earlier, that while they’re flattered the name is being used, they’re surprised as they were not asked if it can be used, and they went on to further suggest that that be the case. They want to be asked. They want to be consulted.

In this particular approach, what we’ve seen the government do is that they’ve gone ahead, they’ve changed the name, they’ve expanded it, but “Mushkegowuk” is still in the name and they still haven’t asked their permission. This is why we went all the way by plane

and by boat to get to Moose Factory: to hear what they had to tell us. We heard, but they didn’t do nothing about it—nothing; nothing at all. In fact, what they did do was make it more insulting by adding to the name but leaving “Mushkegowuk” in it. They still have not asked for their permission—which we heard 100 times to use their name.

What we’re offering, what the PCs have offered in our amendment, is to consult with First Nations, the grand chiefs, the chiefs. It’s very clear. Our amendment that we brought forward last Monday—it didn’t make it. Instead, the government amendment, the Liberal amendment, to expand the name, against the wishes of the First Nation—well, they passed that one. That’s the new one, Speaker, as shocking as that must be to you.

I believe that the grand chiefs and the chiefs were pretty clear that they were offended to see the name being proposed without their advance approval, and here we are, a week after amendments, two weeks after we were in the Far North, and this government has made precisely the same mistake that they made in presenting the name in the first place, but it’s an insult, to use the words of the chiefs, all over again. They’re insulting the insult now. They’ve doubled down on the insult.

I think this second insult would be viewed more tragically than the first time, when we went there. When we went there, we went there to listen. I can tell you, from my perspective, I was not aware of their feelings, but within 30 seconds we sure heard loudly and clearly, and by the end of the day we’d heard it over and over and over. So to go back to them now—I can’t even begin to imagine what they must have thought Monday afternoon last week when the amendments were passed, and they had doubled down and re-insulted them—just added a bit more to the name. As I said, we flew there. We took boats across the river, vehicles to get up there. We listened to them. We came back in all that reverse order—the vehicles, the boats, more vehicles, more planes—and here we are again, listening to the Liberals: They did exactly and precisely what the First Nations were offended by in the first place. We’re back to square one, but maybe a little bit worse than square one. Had they left well enough alone, they only insulted them once. Now we’ve gone and doubled down, and here we go again: They’ve insulted them a second time.

I asked that we have written consent for the use of the name. I’ve asked that we suggest a different name, that we have other, more appropriate names be used. All that got turned down.

They found the name “Mushkegowuk” to be alarming. They found the use of the name “Mushkegowuk” to describe the riding—so it’s not just the name that offended them, that they weren’t asked; it’s how they describe this riding as “Mushkegowuk.” I felt, and our party felt, that our amendment leaves room for consultation to happen properly, what they asked for, without the name “Mushkegowuk” being forwarded as one of the proposed names. That’s what we should have done. That would have been the right thing to do.

I want to go back to the consultation process because, again, Speaker, my notes are all over the page here. I was writing as fast as I could during the live consultations in Moose Factory. They asked us to give—I'm quoting—"serious consideration ... to go back to the drawing board." They said what you're doing "is not reconciliation." This is, "We know what's best for you." I think we all should have come away from there fully understanding how they felt. There should have been no question that they didn't want that name there. They don't want a part of it. It doesn't represent properly the area that that riding will be.

1420

Now, in terms of the consultation process—again, this goes back to the grand chiefs—go back to them with a clean slate, a clear slate, no preconceived ideas. I think one of the members called it a "temporary placeholder." They want to go back with a temporary placeholder. We know what's going to happen with that. A permanent name was not developed, so the Liberals are proposing one, making one up. That's exactly what the First Nations asked not to happen. Instead, our amendment was to propose to go back with a clean slate.

I'm going to offer yet another interpretation and another quote from the grand chiefs. They tell us that there was "no consent" to use the name. They went so far as to say that it's "disrespectful" to use the name and that you are "taking their name." That's how they felt. You're "taking their name," so to go back to them with the same option as before, albeit now expanded, is the same insult that they perceived the first time.

This option that we brought removes that slight and it honours what the grand chiefs and the chiefs were asking for. Speaker, there's time. There's time to fix this and to do it right. In fact, there's so much time that, again, Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon said they would rather wait it out another four years and "go back to the drawing board" than to have this riding proceed. They would rather it not proceed. They want real consultations that take place in the Mushkegowuk territory, and that a riding be considered and implemented which respects their wishes and their thoughts.

Speaker, I don't know what happened between the flight from Moosonee back to Toronto, but something along that flight changed. It was the end of the week two weeks ago. We flew back. I thought, "Yes, we got it. We got this. We hear you. Boy, you couldn't have said it any better. We get it. You don't want that. We understand why you don't want that. We understand you feel slighted. Certainly, from everything you've told us, you have been slighted. We got this. Don't worry. We're going to bring amendments that are going to—we'll fix this. We'll fix this."

The amendment that came was—I think I heard one of the third party use "gobsmacked" this morning in question period. Well, I can tell you, I was gobsmacked. When I looked at these amendments and read that first one, I thought, "What the heck just happened? Were you not at the same hearings we were at? How can this be? How can this happen?"

If the riding we ended up with was indeed the actual territory of the Mushkegowuk, I'm pretty certain, Speaker, they would have been happy to have it called that, even though they weren't consulted in advance, if the actual riding represented that name. You could see that it would make some sense. But what they're saying, and why they don't offer an alternative, is because in Grand Chief Fiddler and Grand Chief Solomon's letter to us, on page 7, item 5: "Lastly, but significantly, is the naming of one of the proposed new ridings in the James Bay region. The FNEBC has recommended that this ... be named 'Mushkegowuk.'" This is in their letter. They're saying, "This was done without consultation or permission from the Mushkegowuk Council, NAN, and the First Nations in this territory. Naming this" riding—they call it the PED—"Mushkegowuk" is misleading, as this government's own statistics indicate that the majority of the population would be francophone, not indigenous. This is highly inappropriate and may cause significant confusion with the political interests of the Mushkegowuk Council."

It's clear why they're offended. It's as plain as day. They said it was an ambitious schedule. In May, when they first met, they said they'd talk again for feedback. But never again were they consulted. They said they have concerns about confusion. Calling the riding Mushkegowuk is not what it means—it is not a riding of Mushkegowuk. It includes Hearst, Kapuskasing and other communities far, far from the coast. They're south and they're west—a considerable distance; a long flight. "There was no consent," is what they said. These are my notes that I took down. They said it was disrespectful and that we are taking their name. Wow. I don't think you would have to clarify any further, Speaker, what the heck they're saying, because it's pretty darn clear.

They are looking for reasons why there were no alternatives put forward. They were thoughtful and respectful. They made very succinct presentations. They all left there with the understanding that we got it; we understood what they were talking about. And here we are, at the eleventh hour now, and we're back to where we started but maybe just a little bit worse. Speaker, you have to ask yourself and you have to wonder why. We were all in the same meeting. We saw the passion that the grand chiefs and the chiefs spoke with. They were passionate. They were offended. They had a lot of passion. You could feel their history coming through in every word they said. They told us how insulted they were. You had to feel for that; you had to understand how insulted they were and why. They were very clear about the why. They put together a very succinct presentation.

I believed that the government was going to go right back to Toronto and whip up an amendment that said, "Yup; boy, didn't mean to, but we'll fix this." It boggles my mind, Speaker, that we ended up with the chance to not insult them and acknowledge that we listened to what they said, and instead we're going to see this Legislature ignore it and go back—we went right back at them with the same thing. I can only imagine their eyes rolling

when they saw this latest—they must have looked at each other and said, “Were we in a different room? Why were they nodding? Did they not understand what we were saying?” Because I’m telling you, we understood, and crafted our amendment as such.

Needless to say, here we are. Amendments were done, various ones were carried, and this one was moved around and this one was amended. Next thing you know, one was withdrawn; another one was out of order. At the end of the day, we’re back to not the riding of Mushkegowuk, but now we have the riding of Mushkegowuk–James Bay, which is equally confusing, equally insulting and equally disrespectful of all of the people who made presentations to us.

1430

They talked about the various examples from around the country when we talk about representation by population. That’s what we learned in school as kids: rep by pop. So we know that in Ontario, ridings are around 100,000 each. That’s why we have redistribution every so often, to try to realign these ridings to better reflect the population, especially in the faster-growing urban centres. It’s why we’re adding, for the most part in urban centres, 15 ridings for the June 7, 2018, election.

We know that population is not the only thing that needs to be taken into account. Yes, it’s critical, especially in the urban centres, but in the north—and in rural Ontario, for that matter, and especially in the Far North—these ridings are big. They are vast areas of geography. It takes a tremendous amount of time to get from one end to the other, and, quite frankly, it’s not fair. It may be represented accurately by population, but not by geography. So the idea to divvy up the two ridings into four is solid.

I know that in my riding of Nipissing, I can get from one end to the other in about two hours. That’s how long it would take me to go from end to end—maybe a little longer, depending on if it’s in the winter. I have a riding of approximately 85,000 people, so I’m smaller than other ridings who are within the average of 100,000, but I don’t know how you would add to it without adding to the geography and the time it would take.

So we look at the northeast and the northwest ridings. I’ve heard from some of the members in the Far North that it could take a dozen or more hours—in some cases, far more than that—to get from end to end. You really can’t even do it in a day. And yet we have ridings in the GTA where it could take you a dozen minutes to get from end to end. There are 20 or 30 MPPs here who have one mayor. In our northern ridings—I know in my riding of Nipissing, I have 11 mayors that I meet with, who comprise my riding: one in North Bay, and 10 rural mayors.

I had the 10 rural mayors invited to my home this summer for a barbecue and a day-long session. Patty put on dinner for us after, as well. It was a good opportunity to talk, and we talked a lot. We talk about very specific things in terms of what we need in terms of infrastructure and whatnot, but we also talk about how we’re represented and how we’re thought of in southern Ontario.

I’m a small riding by northern comparisons. Mine’s a couple of hours from end to end. So we can understand that it can’t always be by population, that we are looking at geography as being an integral part of it. That’s why we are going to end up with a couple of ridings in the northeast: One is just the city of Timmins, with 45,000 or so, and this other riding—I’d like to say the yet-to-be-named riding, but I guess if the Liberals have their way, it’s going to be the riding of Mushkegowuk–James Bay, as inappropriate as that is—which will be around 37,000 or something along that line.

Some people would say, “Come on. That’s not right. You’ve got a small amount of people being represented by one person, and others have to have 100,000. That just doesn’t make any sense.” But the chiefs talked about the PEI example, where I think it’s four seats for a small area. I mean, you could fit PEI into Sudbury 14 times—the city of Greater Sudbury is 14 times the size of PEI. That’s just Sudbury. It’s pretty interesting when you think about these things. When you look at the size of northern Ontario, there are 880,000 men and women who live there, and kids and seniors—880,000 people—and it’s vast. It takes a long, long time to get from end to end. So this is a solution to bring truer representation to areas that are tougher to get to.

So we can see why Chief Faries from Moose Cree First Nation—she was very well-spoken. She came from the private sector. She was a criminal lawyer. She’s been chief two times. She talked about the alarming use of the name “Mushkegowuk” and how having that as the name of the riding doesn’t mean anything to them. They weren’t consulted; they hadn’t seen any maps of the riding since all of this came about. She talked about the poverty, Speaker—and we heard our member from Sault Ste. Marie talk about Third World conditions this morning. Well, she talked about that. Those were her words as well. There are Third World conditions. That’s such an important message to bring to Queen’s Park.

I’m really glad everybody travelled to Moosonee. You got to meet some great people and when we crossed over to Moose Factory, a great chance to chat with the operator of the boat. You got to see a little bit of the north and the beauty of the north because it was a spectacular day—it was 17 degrees. It was a beautiful, sunny day. But they have food insecurity, economic instability, higher unemployment, high drug overdose rates, high suicide rates. This is why they are looking for a representative to be here specifically on their issues. They know that, in their words, “The provincial government failed to appropriately accommodate the Mushkegowuk people.” And they asked a very simple question: “How can the provincial government create a riding called ‘Mushkegowuk’” when the people of Mushkegowuk are not represented? It’s a pretty simple question to ask. You would think we could have got this answered during the opportunity for amendments, and clean that up.

Now, I’ve painted a bit of a bleak picture—in her own words. When I use the words “food insecurity” and “economic instability,” these are all the chief’s words.

I've been quoting everything. But just to give you a different perspective, there was a headline in the media recently, "First Nation in Ontario Using Drones to Help Lower Costs, Create Jobs"—pretty darn progressive. This is the Moose Cree First Nation. They teamed up with a Toronto-based company here called Drone Delivery Canada to see if those self-flying aircraft can reduce the time and expense of bringing food, medicine and other supplies to remote communities. We don't have that in North Bay. We don't have that in places like Toronto. You hear Amazon talking about how your books are going to be delivered by drones one day. But here we are with this little aircraft called the Sparrow; it's a 10-pound capacity drone. You have to appreciate the why. Why would you go to that trouble? Well, in the Far North, this is a great solution to a very real problem. Twice in the year, once coming up very soon when you've got the freeze-up, the water is not quite navigable by boat and pretty darn cold. You might not want to be out there. There's lots of ice forming. And so you can't get there by boat.

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Again in the spring, in the breakup, you've got ice floes and it's very dangerous. You've got a very dangerous situation. You can't really get there or back by boat. Freeze-up and breakup—that's what happens. You need a helicopter; it's the only way to get anything over there. It's the only way. The rest of the year: summer, you go by boat; winter, you go by sled—some would call it a snowmobile. That's how you get there. But those two times a year, you go by helicopter. Six hundred and fifty bucks an hour is a Toronto rate; can you imagine the rate of a helicopter in the Far North? So this is a great concept. If there's a very quick medical need, if there's just day-to-day food supply, 10 pounds—zipping a drone back and forth. Brilliant.

Why I tell you about that is because although the chief and others, myself included, paint a picture of the Third World conditions—which are very real in the Far North—in some instances they're way ahead of us as well. When you look at turning to drones to help lower the costs and create jobs, that's pretty darn smart. This is Moose Cree, by the way. It's about two and a half kilometres from Moosonee. It's an island; we call it Moose Factory Island. There's no easy way. So for that little jaunt, if you need something, and there's no helicopter available, or you haven't got the price of the helicopter, this is really something. Instead of a barge in the summer, trucks or sleds in the winter, or ice roads, pricey helicopters to fill the gap, now you've got the experimenting with drones to transport these key supplies. That's pretty out there. Good for them.

I think, Speaker, that in conversation with people you will see other innovations that will bring some excitement to the region. We've heard the phrase "blockchain" in the media before. Blockchain is an innovation that is designed to bring transparency and efficiency to industries like health care, financial services, logistics, construction, arts, entertainment, education. You've got

people who are on the leading edge of this technology. While Ontario certainly can be a world leader in nurturing these developments, when I hear lots of talk about drones but it's actually going to happen in Moosonee and Moose Factory, it's exciting to know that when developers of blockchain are encouraged to come back to Ontario, it would not surprise me to know that all communities in Ontario have an opportunity for some of these innovations.

When we have First Nations like the Moose Cree who are far advanced in terms of the actual practical use of drones, that's pretty good to see. I was very encouraged by that. In the north, so frequently we are misunderstood.

When I think of Voyageur Airways in North Bay, with 350 employees, they have aircraft from all over the world that come into North Bay because we have a 10,000-foot runway—one of four in Ontario, one of 15 in Canada—to have maintenance, repair and overhaul done. You may not think about that in northern Ontario, but it's there.

We have FDM4, a computer software company. When you go online to order golf clubs—I'm not sure which brand—the backbone software that company uses is from FDM4 in North Bay. When you are looking at rodeo equipment, it's made by Appliteck in Powassan, Ontario. It's fascinating, the work that is done in my riding of Nipissing and throughout northern Ontario that is shipped worldwide. There are a couple of members here who joined in a tour of one of the lumber companies in Englehart this summer. Their product is manufactured and shipped widely. It is truly amazing how many products are indeed designed, manufactured and shipped out of Ontario's north. Canador College has a spectacular—ICAMP, it's called. It's just spectacular. It's robotics. It is partially funded by industry throughout the city. I know that Rotacan is one of the companies that have donated time, money and equipment to ICAMP. There are many, many more—far too many to mention.

Our aspirations are the same as everybody's aspirations. We want a better place for our kids to grow up. We want choices. We want to be able to live where we choose. We want to be represented where we choose to live as well. So when you've got communities like the 11 ridings currently in the north, which will become 13 ridings, it gives us more voices in Queen's Park, voices that we desperately need to help get our message—as 15 other ridings are being added, our overall percentage of the ridings in Ontario gets smaller. We have two new seats but fewer voices in Queen's Park altogether.

I think that's why it's so very important that we add these two seats, but that we do it right. At the risk of sounding immensely repetitive, we're not doing it right. We're just not doing it right. They know it, being the Mushkegowuk. They know it, meaning the government. We all know it. It's not being done right, and I think that's disappointing. We've got one kick at the can here and we should be doing it right, Speaker.

Everybody—whether you're in the GTA, southwest, southeast, northern Ontario, the Far North, you've got dreams for your families as well. You've got hopes and

aspirations. You want to be respected as well. In this particular case, we missed the bar. We missed that, Speaker. We heard it repeated many times, their exact wording, but we've heard it loudly and clearly. We missed the bar on this one, and that's disappointing.

Maybe we have a chance to fix this. I'm hoping we'll be listened to. We didn't win it in amendments where we tried, where it would have been the right day and the right place to fix that up. Why are we debating this if we're not going to have a chance to do what's right? There's no right or wrong here. Let's just get it done the way the grand chiefs have asked, and just do this. We have a chance to fix this up.

The only other thing I wanted to address, and I shouldn't be addressing it in this speech, but there's an Election Finances Act—a set of changes thrown into this bill that creates two ridings in the Far North, but in addition, somehow this bill amends the Election Finances Act as well. “Oh, well, while we're at it, we might as well fix up the other thing we fouled up here.”

Make no mistake, Speaker: Again, the Liberals got caught in a campaign finance scandal and, because of that, the pendulum swings as far as you can possibly swing to try to cover all the sins that were created when they got caught. I guess they didn't quite fix everything that they thought they ought to fix, that their campaign finance scandal put them in, and they want to fix a few more things. I think it's opportunistic at worst that they throw this into a bill where we really see that they can't even comprehend the basics of the bill, yet they complicate it by sticking in some election finance goodies at the end of it.

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I think that's disappointing. It makes people in Ontario question the Liberal government's trust and the trust they have in them—if there's any left—and it also makes people cynical.

I think that's what I saw. I went knocking on doors in Sudbury this past weekend. Troy Crowder is our candidate there—a great northern boy. He played hockey for the North Bay Centennials in the OHL. He went to high school at Chippewa High in North Bay. My executive assistant, Andrea, went to school with him at Chippewa. He's a great young man. He went on to the NHL, played several years in the NHL, came back to Sudbury, and here we are now, campaigning door to door in Sudbury.

I've got to tell you, Speaker: I got an earful about the Liberal government. They don't trust them. They're eager for them to be gone. They felt that they're past their best-before date. Certainly that was what we heard very clearly at door after door. They're very, very concerned that everything they see is for the benefit of the government and never for the benefit of the people.

I can't figure it out, this name thing. Again, it's not for the benefit of the people. The people don't want it. The people that we're talking about, the grand chiefs, the chiefs in the Mushkegowuk area, don't want this. Yet the government seems to be barrelling through going ahead with this. This bill is not going to benefit the people at

the end to the extent that it could. Yes, there's going to be an additional representative, and that's good. But good heavens—we're quibbling over the name here, except to them, it's not quibbling. This is a major insult and so typical of this government.

They can fix this quickly. They could have fixed it the other day, but oh gosh, no way. They're not going to give our party an amendment. “God forbid we fix it because the PCs have a better solution; that's never going to happen.” So they add insult to injury, and that's exactly what I heard on Saturday door to door.

I was not surprised. I heard it when I knocked on doors for Ross Romano, our MPP from Sault Ste. Marie. I could have told you right then and there that the Liberals were going to come in third. I heard it at the door, and I'm telling you, Speaker, I heard it at this door as well: that everything this government seems to do is to benefit the Liberal Party, not the people of Ontario.

Again, Speaker, I don't get it. I don't get why they just cannot do this. There's some reason—I haven't been able to figure it out yet—why they're so adamant and insistent on forcing down a name that the people, the leaders, the chiefs and the grand chiefs, don't want. There's some reason. I'm eager to hear it. I haven't heard it yet. We didn't hear it in the Attorney General's opening 20 or 30 minutes. I'm hoping that in the time remaining, maybe we can hear from the Liberals as to what the issue is, why they're so hell-bent on continuing to insult the Mushkegowuk people, the chiefs, the grand chiefs and all the other presenters that we had.

I have appreciated the opportunity to spend this hour. It kind of went by fast for me. I'm not sure about you, Speaker, how you felt about it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lightning-fast. Riveting.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, I thought some parts of it were riveting.

I'm just looking at my final notes that I took when Chief Faries spoke. She said that this half-measure will not suffice. They really want to see a member of the Mushkegowuk people serve in the Legislature. But the proposed riding, in her words—and I believe it is correct—goes far beyond the Mushkegowuk territory.

Speaker, for heaven's sake, we stand in this Legislature. We've outlined an issue here that can easily and quickly be remedied. We've provided a remedy. If we're not going to do something, why do we bother standing here and offering these things when the government continues on their selfish agenda, ignoring the very people that they set out to address in the first place?

I thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to be able to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 152, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act.

This started out quite positive, if you ask me. It looks like everybody was in agreement that we need to give our First Nations and the people of the Far North of this province more of a say into what goes on at Queen's

Park, because—have no doubt—the decisions we make here in Toronto at the Legislative Assembly, at Queen’s Park, often have a very different impact on northern Ontario than what we intended to do.

We have a few of the NDP caucus that come from northern Ontario. Certainly, the two ridings of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay are presently represented by two NDP members. I also have one of those big northern ridings. They can tell you that it is difficult but doable. My colleague Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins–James Bay, has been representing this area for more than 25 years. I would say he did a very good job of it.

The idea was to do even better. The idea was, given that a huge part of the Far North is represented by First Nations, why don’t we redraw those areas to make sure that it reflects Ontario?

Ontario is a beautiful province, in part because of the wide diversity of who we are. I heard recently that Toronto is the city that has the most diverse culture of people living together in one city. I would say that that expands to all of Ontario, with the rich cultural heritage of all of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit who live in the northern part of our province.

Here we are with something good: We’re going to give them more of a say. So a commission is put together. They tour around; they go and talk to them—to all of us, really—and submit a report; and from the report, a bill is drafted. Then it starts to go south, as in it’s not so good anymore.

First of all, the bill, although it is called “An Act to amend” representation, also has “and certain other Acts.” So, no, it’s not just about providing ridings for the people of the Far North, the First Nations that live there. They also threw in a couple of contentious issues just for good measure. Why they did that, I don’t know. It has nothing to do with new boundaries, but there it is: the Election Finances Act and—anyway. Why this is in here, I really don’t know, but here we are.

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Then, the recommendations came out. And this is where, as we started to look at it, it starts to be not as clear of an outcome as we would have liked. The new Mushkegowuk, which is basically a part of Timmins–James Bay except for the city of Timmins, is only 27% First Nations. The bigger part of it is really francophone. I’m Franco-Ontarian; there is nothing wrong with making a riding majoritarily francophone, but that was not the goal of the exercise. The goal of the exercise was to make sure that First Nations had an opportunity to be heard, that First Nations had an opportunity to get elected and speak and be part of what goes on here. How do you do this when only 27% of the people are First Nations? It’s not obvious. When you look at other new riding being created, Kiiwetinoong, we see that we have 68% indigenous representation, which to me is more in line with what we had set out to do.

The bill was introduced at first reading, travelled around and came back for second reading. Right at

second reading we started to ask them, what is the goal of this exercise, again? Because we all understood that the goal of the exercise was to make sure that we give indigenous people, First Nations, an opportunity to be heard. Well, if that was the goal of the exercise, then I say we failed, because this is not what we are going to end up with. We’re going to end up with one riding that will be majoritarily First Nations at 68%, but we’re going to end up with another one that’s going to have a majority of francophones—again, nothing against the francophones.

It’s this disconnect that makes people angry. When you set out and say publicly that here’s what you intend to do and here’s how this is going to work, and you go out and make a commission that listens to people and that brings ideas forward—all the time telling them that the goal of the exercise was to increase indigenous participation at Queen’s Park in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—and you end up with this, then you start to ask questions. Then something that was set out as good ended up not so good and took a turn for the worse.

Then, all of us who have connections with First Nations, who have friendships, who have opportunities to talk to them, we started to hear back that they were actually not happy that we named the new riding Mushkegowuk because this word represents something that is not being represented in that riding. Why would we do that? Using words that come from First Nations language—there is nothing wrong with this. I think this is great. I have Atikameksheng Anishnawbek—I have many in my riding who use their own language to describe who they are. But that’s not what Mushkegowuk is. Mushkegowuk is not 60% francophone. It is not that territory. Then you start to scratch your head and say, “Why are we doing this again? Oh, yes: because we wanted to give indigenous people more of a say.” You cannot give people more of a say when you refuse to listen to them on things that are as basic as the name of a riding. This is disrespectful, in my view, and it is sad. First Nations are not talked about in this Legislative Assembly very often. Their issues, their problems, their hopes, their aspirations are seldom shared in here, and if they are, they are as a sidebar, never as the main topic of discussion. But we were about to change this with Bill 152. We were about to focus on the needs, the aspirations, the wants and everything else that comes from the Far North where so many of our First Nations friends and colleagues live. Yet here we are at third reading with a time-allocated last speech on the issue, which basically means that the hope of making any changes to the bill is gone. The bill will go exactly as it is drafted here in front of me. The chances for making any more changes are gone, and yet we are far away from the goal that we had given ourselves. This is a sad ending to something that could have been so much more positive—

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think that’s Chief Solomon.

M^{me} France Gélinas: A cellphone just went off. This is something you’re not allowed to do in the Legislative

Assembly, so my colleague made a joke that it was a First Nations chief, Chief Solomon, phoning in to let us know that they are not happy, that they don't feel like they have been heard, that they still have issues with the bill and are basically asking us to take our time to do it right.

We've made some steps in the right direction, and I'm always willing to celebrate the small victory. I'm happy with the small steps we have made in the right direction. I think we could have done way better. I think we should have done way better, but we did not get there. This is one part of the bill. It is not my bill to carry. It is my good friend's from Timmins–James Bay, but I wanted to put those few words on the record. I'm happy to celebrate a small victory, but we could have done so much better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Toronto is located on the traditional territory of the indigenous peoples dating back countless generations, and I want to show my respect for their contributions and recognize the role of treaty-making in what is now Ontario. Hundreds of years after the first treaties were signed, they're still relevant today.

In May 2016, Premier Kathleen Wynne rose in this House to express the commitment of the government of Ontario to being full partners with indigenous peoples on the journey towards reconciliation and healing. There are several pathways on this journey. One of them is the northern boundaries bill introduced by the Ministry of the Attorney General. As my esteemed colleague explained, one of the aims of the northern boundaries bill is to improve representation of all people living in Ontario's northernmost communities.

The Ministry of the Attorney General created the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, an independent body to review electoral representation for people living in northern communities, many of whom are indigenous peoples; in fact, the majority of them are indigenous. The commission's recommendations are thoughtful and informed by the perspectives that were shared with northern communities, including indigenous peoples, during public consultations. I believe the commission has done so with integrity and respect.

I'm speaking in support of my colleague's motion today because so many people in northern Ontario belong to First Nations and Métis communities, and improving indigenous representation was a very important consideration for the commission—oh, and did I mention that they were majority indigenous?—in determining those new electoral boundaries.

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People in Ontario's Far North need and deserve to be better heard at the provincial level. As my esteemed colleague explained, the proposed legislation would adjust the electoral boundaries in the geographic area currently occupied by the Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay area and create two new additional ridings in that space. The new ridings would be called

Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk–James Bay; and, of course, the bill would make necessary consequential amendments to enable their creation.

These electoral districts are geographically vast; however, the people and communities in the electoral district are diverse, including anglophones, First Nations, franco-phones and Métis. According to the 2017 INAC on-reserve data, there are 98 reserves and 52 First Nations in the area. The electoral district of Kenora–Rainy River has a population of over 85,000, and 40% are indigenous. The Timmins–James Bay electoral district has a population of more than 71,000, 17% of whom are indigenous. There are 10 reserves and eight First Nations within the geographic area of Timmins–James Bay.

Under the current boundaries, indigenous communities often do not have a majority voice over certain aspects of their political affairs. The new riding of Kiiwetinoong will have a majority indigenous population of 68%, while Mushkegowuk–James Bay will have significant indigenous representation of 27%.

I support this legislation because the new proposed boundaries will create a situation in which indigenous voters in Ontario's north can have a greater voice in issues relevant to them, and that is why it is important to us. This bill will allow them to have greater representation in the next election. I am confident that it will help to improve representation for indigenous communities in Ontario's north.

I began by remarks today with a traditional greeting for the land that we are on, and I did so out of respect and as a reminder of the agreement that allows us to be here. Thus, I would like to review the treaties that relate to the areas that are included in the proposed legislation, as well as First Nations that are signatories to those agreements.

Three treaties cover the areas of the two existing electoral districts: Treaty 9, Treaty 3 and Treaty 5. Treaty 3 was signed in 1873 and Treaty 5 was signed in 1875. Treaty 9, also known as the James Bay Treaty, was signed in 1905–06 with an adhesion added in 1929. This treaty covers almost two thirds of northern Ontario, encompassing the entire electoral district of Timmins–James Bay as well as the northern and central-eastern areas of the Kenora–Rainy River electoral district.

The political territorial organization Nishnawbe Aski Nation, or NAN, represents the 49 First Nations communities encompassed within the Treaty 9 territory as well as the communities within Ontario's portion of Treaty 5, an area totalling more than 500,000 square kilometres.

Treaty 3 encompasses the geographic area west of Thunder Bay, totalling 142,000 square kilometres. It stretches from the border with Minnesota to north of Sioux Lookout and west to Manitoba. Grand Council Treaty 3 is the traditional government of the Anishnawbe Nation within Treaty 3 territory. GCT3 represents the 28 First Nation communities covered by Treaty 3.

There are also a number of Métis communities in northern Ontario. Métis have their own unique way of life, with a distinct culture, traditions and understandings

of nationhood. They have played a significant role in this province's treaty history. Throughout their history, Métis have actively asserted their rights and advocated for the protection of the land. I am pleased that the commission took Métis culture and concerns, as well as the treaties in those territories, into consideration in making its recommendation. This is an important part of demonstrating our government's commitment to honouring those relevant agreements.

Mr. Speaker, I must echo my esteemed colleagues when I say that Ontario's indigenous people, especially those in the Far North, deserve to have representation that advocates for their specific needs. As is stated by the commission's preliminary report, it viewed indigenous feedback as a particular priority in its work. After the preliminary report was released, it was sent to every First Nation community in the Far North, looking for feedback. Furthermore, the commission endeavoured to provide as many opportunities as possible for indigenous peoples to share their perspectives.

During the first round of engagement sessions, hearings were held in nine First Nation communities. Members of the commission also attended the spring assemblies of NAN, Grand Council Treaty 3, and the Chiefs of Ontario. In addition to participating in the spring assemblies, the commission also operated an information booth during the Chiefs of Ontario summer assembly in Lac Seul First Nation.

Might I remind everyone of this House that it is also significant that three of the five commissioners, including the chair, are indigenous. The commission's engagement and consultation process was intentional and respectful, and it was also intentional that they were majority indigenous. It represents the government's goal to build stronger relationships with indigenous communities.

If passed, the proposed new ridings will take that even further, by helping to improve political representation and create stronger reciprocating relationships for these indigenous communities in Ontario's north. I'm confident of this because of the commission's process and structure, which included those indigenous voices.

In addition to increased indigenous representation and the recognition of historical treaties, I support the commission's recommendations because these new electoral districts, if passed, would allow greater political representation, to address regional and geographical factors such as sparse population; indigenous languages; communication challenges; fly-in communities; the dense boreal forest of the Canadian Shield; and the bogs and fens of the Hudson Bay lowlands. These factors were crucial considerations for the commission, because they explicate the concerns expressed by indigenous peoples and communities in these areas in northern Ontario.

We must also locate the importance of this bill in relationship to the cultures of indigenous communities and how they relate to Ontario's commitment to reconciliation.

As the commission's report points out, the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or the TRC, called attention to Canada's long and damaging history of col-

onialism in relation to indigenous peoples. Past federal and provincial government actions have left deep scars on the lives of so many indigenous people, indigenous communities, and Canadian and Ontario society much more broadly.

I'm pleased that a commitment to reconciliation was reflected in the composition, operations and mandate of the commission, which was majority indigenous, as well as the recommendations that have led to this proposed legislation. I reiterate that three of the five commissioners are indigenous, including the chair. This could be the first electoral boundary commission in Ontario and Canadian history with a majority of indigenous members. That was our intention, and we are pleased to see that.

The commission operated with the goal of reconciliation in mind and, as detailed in its final report, engaged extensively with indigenous communities, chiefs and councils, Grand Council Treaty 3 and NAN in its decision-making. The statutory mandate explicitly required them to consider representation of indigenous peoples.

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Not so long ago, indigenous groups, including First Nations people and Inuit, were precluded from voting in the Canadian electoral system. Prior to 1960, status Indians, as defined by the Indian Act, could vote in federal elections only if they chose to forfeit their Indian status and met other very specific qualifications. Prior to 1954, Ontario was one of the three provinces to impose racial restrictions on voting eligibility, where only "enfranchised Indians" living off-reserve and owning real property were permitted to vote. That is ridiculous. After this was statutorily changed, section 3 of the charter enshrined all citizens' right to vote, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit, in 1982. That's not that long ago.

The commission pointed out that the history of indigenous suffrage is therefore part of a broader discussion of issues related to exclusion, inclusion and participation of indigenous peoples in the electoral system; self-determination and sovereignty; and the concept of citizenship. Enhanced political representation for indigenous peoples in Ontario's political system is a necessary component of the broader movement towards reconciliation.

The northern boundaries bill, if passed, will help acknowledge the diverse views within indigenous communities with regard to participation in the provincial electoral system. More importantly, according to the commission, many of the indigenous people they met with were strongly in favour of enhanced representation at Queen's Park.

The commission also recognized, and I recognize, that some indigenous people were ambivalent about involvement in the provincial elections because they view the federal crown as their treaty partner in the nation-to-nation relationship. I am pleased that the commission respectfully took those views into consideration, and I agree with their conclusion that taking a concrete action to improve representation of indigenous peoples in the provincial Legislature is not only part of the com-

mission's statutory mandate; it is also a vital step on the path towards reconciliation. The northern boundaries bill, if passed, will help achieve that.

Another part of Ontario's path to reconciliation, as the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation outlines in *The Journey Together*, is supporting the revitalization of indigenous culture. In the TRC final report, cultural genocide is described as "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group." Language is the foundation of culture, and residential schools actively forbade children from speaking their own languages.

Indigenous peoples in particular have a very strong tradition of oral histories. The commission, I am glad to share, recognized the importance of indigenous languages as it developed its recommendation. The attention that the commission paid to indigenous languages is one of the reasons I support its findings in determining the boundaries for the proposed new electoral districts.

I do want to spend a moment to acknowledge and reiterate the Attorney General's comments. With respect to the name of the new riding, he said that at the recent public hearing in Moose Factory, which I also attended, a number of indigenous leaders voiced concerns regarding the name of one of the proposed ridings. In particular, indigenous leaders raised some concerns regarding the use of the name "Mushkegowuk" for the new north-eastern riding. In response, we are proposing to consult further with affected communities and report any recommendations regarding the new riding name to the Legislature. This is to ensure that the name of this riding best represents the people who live there. Pending this consultation, the legislation refers to the riding as "Mushkegowuk–James Bay." This is an interim measure. Again, we will be conducting a review of the name, in consultation with the communities, and reporting back to the House.

In conclusion, to this end and for reasons I have already spoken to today, I endorse the recommendations of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I believe that, if passed, this legislation will lead us further on the road to reconciliation as it helps us honour treaty agreements, strengthens First Nations and Métis cultures, and contributes to addressing the infrastructure challenges that all of these communities face by giving them a stronger political voice. That is the intention. That is what we want. We want them here in this chamber.

I look forward to voting in favour of the northern boundaries bill introduced by the Ministry of the Attorney General. I encourage my fellow MPPs to support this legislation as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I'm going to try to be positive here. I don't want to—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Anyway, I was just saying, after listening to that and a couple of other speeches, there's a whole bunch of things I would like to say, but I want to be careful in the use and choice of my words.

Often, and it happened in the House today, we talk about respect and reconciliation with First Nations. If we're serious about that, there has got to be some action. There has got to be some sort of concrete action that says, "You were here and now we're moving the yardsticks forward to there." If you look at this bill, none of that is achieved. When you look at what it means for the Mushkegowuk people, you end up with a riding that used to be Timmins–James Bay, which was Timmins, the highway and everything up to the James Bay. Now the Mushkegowuk people in James Bay will find themselves in a riding that has everything that's currently there, except Timmins.

So for the First Nations in Mushkegowuk and others, there's no gain here. There's no riding where they're going to be a majority, where they're able to elect their own and have a First Nations member from the Mushkegowuk territory in the James Bay be here. Now, is it possible? Anybody can get elected; I get it. Even I got elected. So don't worry about that. But the point is that they are in the minority. They're the smallest portion of the people that are in that riding.

We can talk about reconciliation and we can talk about respecting this, and being on the lands of traditional that, and making it sound as we have great intentions. But I'll tell you what Chief Jonathon Solomon told me on the way down here yesterday as I got on my Porter flight—by the way, I love Porter. It's a great way to get back down to Toronto from Timmins and other places. I saw Chief Jonathon Solomon and I said, "Hey, Grand Chief. How do you feel about how things went with the riding name?" He goes, "Typical, very typical. Exactly what they always do. They just do what they want and they don't give a darn about us." I'm paraphrasing a bit. It wasn't exactly that, but that's pretty well what he was getting at.

The point I am getting at here is that you can't be serious about reconciliation—to be serious about reconciliation, you've got to be able to show some action. This bill doesn't show action to the Mushkegowuk people on the first point, which is that of creating a riding in which they would be a majority; and number two, on the riding name.

Let me go to the riding name, just very quickly to go through that, so that people understand what this issue is all about. The commission came back with a recommendation of creating two ridings in northern Ontario: one, Kiiwetinoong, which is going to be the riding in the northwest; and the other would be Mushkegowuk, in the northeast.

The Mushkegowuk tribal council—this is the elected body that represents the Mushkegowuk people on the James Bay and the rest of their territories further south—took this position at their council meeting and then it was further reiterated by the grand chief and others; "Don't use the name of our tribal council to name a riding in which we're going to be in the minority." It's disrespect, as Grand Chief Solomon told us, and others who presented to the committee and others I've heard from since and before. It's disrespect to First Nations because (a) we

never asked to use the name as a name for the new riding, and (b) it's pounding salt into the wound. "We're supposed to be a riding where we're going to be in the majority and you name a riding where we're in a small minority and then use our name to make it look as if it's a good thing." They weren't exactly excited about what the commission came back with as a recommendation, but the name was sort of like the icing on the cake. That was the first part.

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Then, we go to Moose Factory, and committee members heard—the previous member was there with me. They said, "Listen, just change the name. Don't call it Mushkegowuk. Call it something else." I wasn't surprised. I'd normally say at this point, "Imagine my surprise." But I'm going to tell you, I wasn't surprised. As I looked at the amendments that came forward, the amendment put forward by the government was one of the wackiest amendments I've seen in a long time. I use the word "wacky" because it really is a bit of a wacky amendment.

First of all, we don't call it Mushkegowuk anymore. We call it Mushkegowuk–James Bay. Oh, wow, they feel really good about that. If I'm a James Bay Mushkegowuk person and I've been told that I'm now going to be in a minority in the riding that you were supposed to create where I was going to be in the majority and you didn't call it Mushkegowuk, but as a James Bay Mushkegowuk person—you call it Mushkegowuk–James Bay, you're pounding salt into the wound two times. From that perspective alone, they're not very happy.

Let me tell you the wacky part. As I read the amendment, the amendment said we are going to name the riding Mushkegowuk–James Bay and we give the government permission to go out and consult Mushkegowuk and others about a new riding name and to report that back to the House by way of a bill. Since when does this Legislature need the permission of general government to introduce a bill in the House to change a riding name? God, I can do that. Members of the assembly have had private members' bills where they've proposed a name and changed the names of their ridings. You don't need to have permission of the general government committee and an amendment by the government in order to do that.

I went to committee during clause-by-clause and called the legislative counsel people forward or the lawyers for the ministry—I can't remember which—and I said, "Let me see if I understand this. What this amendment does is, it changes it from Mushkegowuk to Mushkegowuk–James Bay and it gives the government permission to bring back legislation to the House to change the name." They said, "Yes, that's pretty well it."

Well, what game are we playing here? Not only are we not creating a riding in which our First Nations partners are full partners in this Treaty 9 that we've signed and they get their own representatives here at Queen's Park, but we can't even change a riding name. What we've got to do is offer them yet another promise. How many promises have we broken? If you're a First Nations person, you're getting pretty thin when it comes

to patience, when it comes to the colonial masters promising things and never living up to them. They signed a treaty with us, as the member said before, starting in 1905 on Treaty 9. Treaty 9 that they signed, their understanding, when you talk to those people who are learned about this stuff from their perspective—because there are still people living today who are related to people who were signatories of the treaty, and there were up until a little while back. They said, "When we signed the treaty, our understanding was that we were sharing the land. The idea was, you would come up here and you would do development, and in exchange we would get to basically share in that development and we would continue governing ourselves and you would help us by providing education, health care and housing in order for our people to move into the next century." That was their understanding; right? So they never gave up on the inherent right they have to govern themselves.

So they look at this bill and say, "Ah, the government's trying to do the right thing here"—the initial bill back last winter. The bill said, "We will create a commission. That commission will go out and consult, and we will hopefully come back with at least one riding, maybe two, where the First Nations would be in a majority." So I, like others, went to the commission, and met with them early on. I went here—it was at Hart House, I believe, next door, at the University of Toronto. I met with the commission. They had the maps up on the wall, and I said, "Listen, I get what the battle here is going to be. The battle will be the size of the ridings."

First of all, I said, "Listen, if you're asking me if there should be one or two ridings, I would create two. And the reason I would create two is a very simple reason. If you're alone as a First Nations person here from, let's say, somewhere across the Far North, and you're but one voice, it gets pretty lonely in the sense of having people whom you can work with, who can be on committee with you, who can sub for you, and who can work together with you on different initiatives. It's better to have more than one person." So I said, "If you're going to create a riding in northern Ontario and the legislation gives you the ability to create two, create two of them. At least those two people, when they come down to Queen's Park, will be able to work together, and they will be able to inform us on those things that are important to them and help lead us towards making decisions that are good for their people."

The commission said, "That's really nice, but how would you do that? If you did that, you would probably end up with two ridings of around 15,000 to 18,000 people, and there's constitutionality." Which is a true issue. They said, "The Constitution says that there have to be ridings that are at least close in number to each other." At the high end, there are about 150,000 population in some ridings. At the low end, like my riding currently, it's about 85,000.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some as low as 60-some-odd thousand?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. I didn't realize it was that. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane says that, in some cases, it's 60,000.

The commission said, "You have to be worried about this whole constitutionality, in the sense that if somebody comes and says, 'I dispute that these ridings are so small, so therefore I'm going to ask for an injunction to stop the election because I think this is unfair,' we might find ours in a bit of a bind here."

I said to the commission at the time, and I'm saying it here again: I'd be less worried about that if I were the government, and I'll tell you why. First of all, there is already precedent across Canada where such a thing has happened. There are examples of provincial governments that have created ridings in Far North regions like the Far North of northern Ontario, where there is, by and large, indigenous population, where the ridings are much smaller in percentage of population to what they are in other ridings.

One example is Newfoundland. In Newfoundland, on average, a riding is around 15,000. It's a smaller province, so each riding is about 15,000. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker: You can knock those doors off in one day. But that's the reality of Newfoundland. We have to respect that. That's their own way of being able to organize themselves.

In Labrador, there are two ridings where there is less than 3,000 in population—one about 2,300, and the other one around 2,700.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. The member says that if you have the right family, you can carry the riding. In some cases, that might be true.

There are other ridings as such in the Far North when it comes to Nunavut and NWT, where you have very small populations as compared to others within their own territory, plus you have that in British Columbia and northern Alberta.

So there is already precedent where provincial Legislatures have created ridings of smaller sizes by considerable percentages in order to accommodate geography and First Nations representation. Plus, there are already some Superior and Supreme Court decisions where they've written and said—well, it wasn't a decision of the Supreme Court, but there have been opinions written by the Superior and Supreme Court where they have said, "You are able to create ridings that are quite a bit smaller provided that you're trying to cover off the actual issues of geography as far as how big they are and how hard it is to service the riding, plus to make sure that you have proper First Nations representation." So there's already a precedent across Canada where we have done this, and our judges have already said, "Do you know what? It's okay."

But I say to the government this—and I wish that one of my colleagues were here whom I can't name because I'd be saying that member is not here, so I won't say that.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I didn't say who it was, and I didn't say what ministry or anything, but I'm just

saying that the government should have said, "Yes, let's take that on."

Let one person in this province stand up and tell me that the Mushkegowuk or the Kiiwetinoong people are not responsible and don't deserve their own representation. Let that person stand up in Ontario. Let that person stand and wave the flag and say, "I don't believe that aboriginals should have representation in the Legislature." Let's find out who that is, and let's have that debate.

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I'll tell you, I think the vast majority of Ontarians, from Toronto to Kenora and across this province, would say that First Nations, darn right, should have the ability to represent themselves. They never gave up that right when they signed Treaty 9, Treaty 3 and Treaty 6, which are the areas in northern Ontario that we represent. They never gave up the right to govern. Why not give First Nations a seat here in the Legislature, where they can have their say?

I don't understand why the government sort of chickened out on this one, because it really was a big chicken, this thing. The government could have stood proud, on a matter of principle, given some direction to the commission, and said: "Come back with a recommendation." And if they didn't come back with a recommendation, we ourselves in committee could make the change at clause-by-clause when this bill went to committee, and figure out a way to create two ridings where you'd have ridings of around 15,000 to 18,000 people. Find a dividing line somewhere. You could probably get them up as high as over 20,000, depending on where you put the line. But my point is that you would end up with ridings of 15,000 to 20,000, compared to a riding such as Timiskaming–Cochrane, which is 60,000.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, your riding is quite large, and I don't argue that. That's a reality, and that has to be made smaller—no argument.

But my point is, imagine if the government had done that, and then all of a sudden somebody stands up in Ontario and says, "I'm taking this to court, because I think First Nations are getting too good of a deal, and they shouldn't get two representatives in the Legislature." The government could have worn this like a badge of honour. The Premier, Madam Wynne, could have got up and said, "Listen, this is horrid. We did the right thing. I do not agree with this particular court case. We will go and we will fight it." She could have been seen as the champion of First Nations.

But instead, you guys chickened out. You didn't do what was bold. I don't know who said this, and I know I won't get the quote right, but sometimes leadership is being bold and doing the right thing.

I have no doubt in my mind that when this originally started, the government had the intent to create one or two ridings where the First Nations would be in the majority. I'm pretty sure that's what the government wanted. But when the election commission came back

with its interim recommendation, I contacted the commission and the minister's office and said, "Hey, we have to figure out a way to tell these guys to come back with some sort of boundary that gives First Nations what they deserve."

The commissioners make up their own minds; I understand that. They decided, "No, we're going to go in that direction anyway," so they made the final recommendation that we got. But the government still had the option of being able to do the right thing at clause-by-clause by amending the legislation in a way that would have given them the majority.

Here was my problem as I was dealing with this, as we were going from the hearings to committee. I was actually going to draft an amendment that created those two ridings in the way that I suggested and in the way that the First Nations have suggested. But it became pretty clear to me that I am not qualified to draw boundary lines for electoral districts.

Interjection: Sure, you are.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm not. The minute that a politician starts to do that, you're in trouble. That really needs to be a bit of an arm's-length thing, because you have to look at it from the perspective of—there are a lot of technicalities that go into it. If you want to draw a boundary, you've got to describe the geography of every part of that riding in a way that is legal, and I don't have the capacity to do that. No member in this House can do that—that's number 1.

Number 2, I don't want to gerrymander what would end up being my riding—or part of my riding, anyway. I don't think it's right for me to have done that.

I thought about it for a while, and I thought about how to come at this. So I came up with the following suggestion at committee, at clause-by-clause, and unfortunately, the government didn't follow my suggestion.

I suggested that the committee could pause the legislation in committee at that point and not report it back to the House, and have the minister contact the boundaries commission and ask them to go back and redraw a boundary that would allow us to have two northern ridings where First Nations would be in the majority, and let the commission do that work. They would have gone out, they would have figured it out, they would have come back and they would have said, "Here's how we think it can be done, if that's the direction you give us." That could have been done in a timely enough manner for the next election, if we had put our minds to it.

The chief, Grand Chief Solomon, said that he needed six months to a year if we went into that process. If we couldn't do it in six months—I think you could have. I think we could have gotten that done if we had started now and we had that thing done by when the House comes back in February, because the House will come back after Family Day in February. We could have had a bill back in the House pass very quickly at third reading, because all it would have taken is to call the committee back, do the amendment as proposed by the commission that we had instructed them to do, and then we could

have ordered the bill back in the House at the beginning of February. That bill could have been dealt with. But the government decided not to do that, and I think that's rather sad, because now what we've got is a riding that is Mushkegowuk in name only and the composition is where they are actually in the minority in the riding.

You'll have to pardon me; I've got a cold.

I think we could have done that, and unfortunately, the government members voted that amendment down when I proposed it. I believe the Conservatives voted it down, which kind of surprised me. I figured that the Conservatives would actually support that amendment, but they didn't, for whatever reason. I thought that was a bit odd, but the member on committee argued that the grand chief had said, it's six months to a year, "and I want to respect that." Yes, I hear you, but at least we could have started the process and there could have been a judgment call at that time if the First Nations were saying, "Listen, we can live with these ridings as they are right now, and we'll do this after the next election." Well, that maybe should have been a decision we left to First Nations. If we're truly serious about reconciliation, it's something that we should have been able to do as a committee.

Excuse me, Speaker. Boy, these colds are just brutal on you sometimes.

So that's the first thing. In the name of reconciliation, we should have done what's right.

I want to also talk about some of the other things that came out of this. One of them is that there's a real possibility that the Mushkegowuk themselves will file an injunction on this legislation. I have heard this bantered around by a few, who have sort of mused at the Mushkegowuk tribal council level that in fact they may seek to themselves file with the courts that this stop because of the riding name and how this bill, in their opinion, doesn't meet what the expectation was from the original bill that came from this House. Because you've got to remember, the original bill was about creating one or two aboriginal ridings where they would be in the majority. The Mushkegowuk people are saying that maybe what they will do is themselves file an injunction. I don't know if they would win that; I'm not going to get into the possibility of winning that or not.

Mr. Speaker, can you give me one minute, please? I've got to blow my nose. I don't want to do it on TV. Flip the camera that way, please. Thank you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll recognize the member for Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm really enjoying the member's comments from James Bay and I look forward to hearing more in the course of the evening. But I'm wondering, is he completely on the bill? I would ask him to direct his comments directly to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I find that the member for Timmins–James Bay is speaking to the bill.

I return now to the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Arthur Potts to the rescue. Thank you. I have this cold, and I'm sorry, guys. That was very nice of you, and I appreciate that. It goes to show that as members we do work together, despite our political differences. We do understand we're all human beings and have our things.

Just to end on that last point, I spoke to a couple of people in the Mushkegowuk Council who mused about that. Again, I don't know if they would actually win such a case against the government on that one, but it's something that was talked about. I think what it points to is the displeasure of the First Nations people with the results of this particular bill.

The other thing I want to say is, what is going to happen after, when this bill is finally passed? If this bill passes—which I imagine it will, because I know I'm going to vote for it, if only because it creates two new ridings in northern Ontario, not because I like the boundaries. You can never as a northerner vote against a bill that creates two new ridings in northern Ontario; that would be silly. It would be like the member from Ottawa voting against creating another riding in Ottawa. Of course you're not going to vote against that. But you can try to do what's right for your folks in the meantime.

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One of the things we have to deal with is, how are we going to service these new ridings? First of all, on the Kiiwetinoong side, that particular riding is going to be Red Lake, Ear Falls, Sioux Lookout and all of the northern communities. Of that riding, about 60% is First Nations, so there is a chance that we're going to elect a First Nations person on a fairly regular basis in that particular riding, and that's a good thing. But once that person gets elected, if it's a First Nations person, the budgets that we have here to service ridings as they are will be inadequate for a First Nations member. Let me explain why.

I'm not from Attawapiskat or Kashechewan or any of those communities I represent; I'm from Timmins. Nobody expects me to be there all the time. Every time there's a funeral in the community—which is really big, by the way. Funerals in First Nations communities are something—it's almost like a must-attend for all elected officials, but less so for me because I'm not from their communities. I don't know the families in the same way that, let's say, Jonathon Solomon or the chief of the community or the grand chief of NAN would. Every time there's a crisis—and you've noticed that there are a lot of crises in our communities: lack of water, water quality, lack of housing, suicide for youth etc. There are all kinds of crises that happen.

There's going to be a huge expectation, if you elect a First Nations person up there in the Kiiwetinoong—you'll notice that I have excluded Timmins–James Bay, because you're not going to elect a First Nations person, more than likely, out of that riding because of the makeup of the riding. There's going to be a huge, huge desire to see that person in the community fairly often.

Here's what we currently get as representatives of that riding. I get to have four flights a year into the northern

part of my riding. That's it. Once I've done those four flights, I have to pay out of my global budget. The government will say, "Well, you have an extra \$24,000 in your global budget to service the James Bay." Well, I run another office in the northern part of my riding with one and a half staff people, office phones and the rest of it. It costs a lot more than \$24,000 a year. I had to strip the operations of my Timmins office when I started representing Timmins–James Bay in order to shift money from that budget to have an office up in Kapuskasing to represent Highway 11.

The \$24,000 that I get more than, let's say, the member from Ottawa—because urban members outside of northern Ontario get \$24,000 less than both the member for Kenora–Rainy River and myself. So the government says, "Oh, all we've got to do is give the new ridings that \$24,000 and they'll be fine." They're going to blow that so fast in travel that it's going to make your head spin.

A return flight on Air Creebec from Moosonee to Peawanuck or Attawapiskat is over a thousand bucks, if you do it with the sked. If you don't do it with the sked—a sked is a scheduled flight—and you have to use a charter, which more than likely is what they're going to have to do, because you can't be in one place for longer when you're needed somewhere else; you've got to come to Queen's Park for your House duty or you've got to do committee work, whatever it might be—you're going to have to do a charter. A charter on the coast, at minimum, is \$3,500. You get four of these per year—four. That's it. If you go to four funerals, you go to four community meetings, you go to four anything, you're going to be done. You will not be able to travel anymore. It will be zero, nada.

Then you're going to have to dip into the \$24,000 that's extra in your global budget. How do you propose the member do that? They're going to have in Kiiwetinoong a riding office, I would argue, probably in Sioux Lookout and probably another one up in Kenora. They're going to face the same problem that I have and Sarah Campbell has, where you have multiple offices and that extra \$24,000 helps you pay for that extra office.

What I have to do is, I have to have fewer staff. Where everybody else has four staff or three and a half staff—I don't know. How many staff would you have on your global budget—four, maybe?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, about four. I have three. I have to not fill a position to be able to service my riding, with two people in Timmins and one and less than a half in Kapuskasing.

That new member in Kiiwetinoong is going to have an office in Sioux Lookout, is going to probably have an office in Red Lake—and you're going to be in a situation where the amount of money you have to pay to maintain that is going to far outstrip the money that you would need to travel in your own riding. So now there is going to be this huge expectation on the part of the member to do their job, and they are not going to be able to do their job because they are going to have one hand tied behind

their back. Now, I know the Board of Internal Economy will be dealing with this, Speaker, but people have got to be tuned in to what's going to be happening here.

It's a little different for me than it is for somebody who lives there. The other thing is, I own an airplane. That's my choice; nobody told me to buy it. Every time I take that money-sucking thing out, it costs me money. I don't make any money for mileage because, when I use my airplane, I charge the same mileage as I would with my car. When I fly from Timmins to Hearst or Timmins to Moosonee, I charge whatever the highway miles would be. I choose to do that because I like to fly. That's why I do it. I don't do it because of generosity; I just love to fly.

So I fly, and it costs me money every time I do it, but you shouldn't expect a new member to make that decision and say, "Well, just do what Bisson did," and what Frank Miclash did before me—because, if you remember Frank, Frank had an airplane as well that he used to service that northern part of the riding. I remember talking to Frank—it was one of the reasons that Frank Miclash would talk to me—about how he serviced his riding. I thought to myself—he was a Liberal, by the way, in case people didn't know who he was. He serviced his riding with an airplane. He had a float plane. To me, that made sense. That's how I got into flying—that conversation and another one having to do with Lloyd Richards, "Mr. Aviation," in Timmins. If anybody doesn't know Lloyd Richards, you should meet him. He's one of the neatest people to talk to. He's very knowledgeable about a bunch of things, but flying specifically.

This new member in Kiiwetinoong is going to be in a bad spot. The member in the new riding of whatever we call it—right now it's Mushkegowuk–James Bay—is essentially going to be the same as what I am now. If I decide—because I can run in either riding: I can run in Timmins or I can run in the new riding, because I have been nominated already in the entire riding. I haven't quite decided yet, but let's say I decide to run in the northern riding. Well, it's no different for me in the new riding, servicing that, than it would be to service Timmins–James Bay. The only thing that is lost is Timmins. I could run in Timmins and I could service that whole thing—I love to say this to my friend Mr. Vanthof—on a bicycle because it's like, literally, 30 minutes across the riding. Or I can stay and run on Highway 11, which is, north-south on Highway 11, about two and a half or three hours if you exclude Timmins. If you just go from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake, it's probably about two and a half hours, maybe three at the most, and then the rest of it is all flying into the north. So we're not fixing anything here. The sense that we're somehow fixing the geography of servicing that riding in the northeast—it really isn't being done. We're actually turning the clock back. Because you will remember, the member from—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Ottawa West–Nepean will remember our good friend Monsieur René Fontaine. He

used to service, along with Len Wood after him, a riding called Cochrane North. Cochrane North is essentially what this new riding is. They had the same challenges that I have currently with Timmins–James Bay.

I remember talking to René a number of times, and I have got to tell you, what a character he was. He was a wonderful man, a very strong fighter for northern Ontario and just a real character. You don't invent people like that, as the member from Ottawa knows. I remember him saying, "Oh ! Gilles, attends que tu aies ce comté-là."—because at first, when I ran, I was Cochrane South, and then they created Timmins–James Bay, which ended up becoming René's old riding and Len's old riding. And I remember René coming up to me and saying, "Oh ! Gilles, tu vas voir, une fois arrivé là, tabarouette, ça va être tout quelque chose—un avion icitte"—and you know René; he spoke Fontainese. I loved the man. But he was right. He was trying to tell me at the very beginning that servicing that riding was really difficult. Cochrane North was a very hard riding to service, and adding Timmins to it didn't change anything. All they did was take Cochrane out—Cochrane, Iroquois Falls and Matheson. So, anyway, we don't fix anything on the other side.

But the point I was trying to make was that, as we go to the Board of Internal Economy, we need to make sure, whenever we create these ridings, that they have the resources to do what needs to be done.

The other thing I want to talk to is this whole notion that we're creating a francophone riding. Bien, veux-tu m'insulter, ou quoi? Moi, je suis francophone de Timmins. On est majoritaire à Timmins. Les francophones sont le plus grand groupe de personnes qui demeurent dans la ville de Timmins. Puis sur la 11, de Smooth Rock Falls à Hearst, c'est majoritairement francophone à 85 %, 80 %; un taux assez haut.

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Ce n'est pas la première fois qu'on a élu un francophone. Je suis un francophone de Timmins. J'ai été élu dans ce comté-là comme francophone. Écoute : on n'a pas besoin d'un nouveau comté pour créer un comté pour les francophones.

Donc, cette notion-là, qu'on est en train de faire quelque chose pour servir la francophonie—moi, je me sens un peu blessé dans cette affaire-là, parce que, what am I, chopped liver, comme ils disent en anglais? Dans le sens que, je suis un francophone qui a représenté cette place-là, ça fait 28 ans. Ça va faire huit élections que j'ai été élu dans ce comté-là. Je pense que ça a démontré que le monde aime avoir un représentant francophone. So, donc, pour la commission de nous dire « On le fait parce qu'on crée un comté francophone », on ne crée pas un comté francophone; on continue un comté francophone. C'est tout ce qu'on fait. De Smooth Rock Falls à Hearst, c'est majoritairement français. Ça va être 80 % ou plus du comté quand ça vient à la population, et, à la fin de la journée, les chances sont pas mal hautes que tu vas élire un francophone dans ce comté-là, tel qu'on le fait présentement.

Si vous regardez sous le comté fédéral, c'est une francophone. C'est Carol Hughes. Ce n'est pas comme si

les francophones ont des difficultés à se faire élire dans ce comté-là. Pour la commission de nous dire, « Mais ça, ça aide les francophones », et que comme d'une manière ou une autre on est connecté avec des Indiens, c'est une bonne affaire—ne va pas dire ça aux autochtones sur la côte de la baie James. Eux autres ne se voient pas comme francophones; ils se voient comme Mushkegowuk.

I was just saying that this notion that we're doing this in order to create a riding for francophones in northern Ontario is a little bit—I don't want to use the word “insulting,” but it's a little bit hurtful, to me, because I have been elected in that area for 28 years; I'm a francophone. For eight elections, people have voted me back in, saying, “We're happy with francophone representation in that riding.” Carol Hughes has now been elected in four or five elections on the federal part of the riding, which is a good part of my riding, currently. So we're not creating, per se, a new francophone riding. What we're doing is continuing, by having another francophone riding. So let's call that what it is.

I want to come back to a comment that was made by a previous member in the debate who talked about Premier Wynne, who made a pledge. I remember that. We had everybody come in to the Legislature. We had the various First Nations representatives here at the very beginning, when she was elected Premier. We all spoke to the need for reconciliation. It was a moving day. It was a day when I think First Nations felt, “Oh, finally, somebody's listening to us.” And that was a good thing. I think we all took on the seriousness of the task we were challenging ourselves with, which was this: Stop the colonialism. Start treating First Nations the way that they should have always been treated, which is as full partners in the governing of their territories.

As I said, they never gave up the right to govern themselves. Treaty 9 doesn't say, “I give you the right to govern me in exchange for something else.” It says, “We will share the land and we will share in the decisions, and we will all benefit from the land.” That's what the treaty essentially says.

If we're truly serious about reconciliation, this legislation really was a step towards true reconciliation and real action, because it would have meant to say that we could have elected—if we had created those two ridings the way they should have been, where they would be in the vast majority—I would argue that if you did it the way that I suggest and that the First Nations have suggested, both of those ridings would be 80% to 90% aboriginal, which really increases the odds of being able to elect a First Nations person to this assembly.

It would have been a real step towards reconciliation, where we recognize that they never gave up the right to govern themselves. We could have had two of their people here, to be part of our committee structure, to be part of this assembly, to have access to ministers or be ministers themselves, to be able to deal with the many issues that they have to deal with—and I'll tell you, there are many of them.

I was telling committee members who were up in Moose Factory when I was there with them about a week

or two ago—I had a number of different constituency appointments prior to the committee coming up. I went up there early, because I had three or four people who wanted to meet with me. I went into the restaurant there where normally we do these kinds of things, and I grabbed a table, and people came over to talk to me.

One woman came to talk to me—and I thought this was really a story about why this legislation is so important. She came to me, and said—I knew this—her daughter, unfortunately, at age 13, five or six years ago, committed suicide. Like any parent, she grieved. She was mad, and she didn't know why, and she was lashing out, trying to figure it out: “What's this all about? Why is my daughter no longer here?”

She comes to me and says, “You know, Mr. Bisson, I was a very frustrated, angry person for three or four years after the death of my daughter, because I couldn't accept that she had died. I didn't really know why she died, and when I started to figure it out, it didn't make any sense at all. It really confused me, and I was really angry. Dealing with my emotions was restricting my ability to deal with the rest of my family in the way that I needed to.”

So she says, “I decided at one point that I needed to get away,” so she went up to Waskaganish. Now, Waskaganish, for those who don't know, is a Cree community on the Quebec side of the James Bay. There's a lot of connection between Moose Factory, Moosonee and MoCreebec, with the people of the James Bay on the Quebec side, because a lot of those Crees worked their way south to Moosonee, Moose Factory and MoCreebec and settled there, on and around the island.

She said, “When I was up there—it didn't take more than a couple of days—somebody in the community noticed that I seemed to be hurting. Finally they said, ‘Well, why don't you go to this place, where we have counsellors, and you can talk to them about what it is that's going on, because clearly you have some issues that you have to deal with.’”

She says, “I went to the counsellor, and I did some meetings with the counsellor, who eventually sought treatment for me. After a period of time, I got to deal with my anger and I got to deal with my hurt. I don't like that my daughter died, but now I understand it, and it has allowed me to deal with the anger, so that I'm a better person.”

The point here is this: She says that none of that was available on the Ontario side of the James Bay. It was only available on the Quebec side. One of the reasons it's available on the Quebec side is the Quebec and James Bay agreement.

They also elect their own, right? We know Mr. Saganash and others who represent the Far North of the Quebec side, and others have done so in the legislature in Quebec, where they've actually had an ability to have an impact on how you design systems to deal with the issues that their communities face.

What does Arthur Potts or Gilles Bisson know about the experience that this woman went through? We have the best of intentions, the two of us, but certainly we have

no idea of the cultural context of all of this, and the residential schools part of this, and the whole shooting match. We don't get it, because we never lived it. What it told me was that if you had two representatives here at Queen's Park, those two representatives could help all of us to better understand these issues.

We all try to do a good job. I know that the minister, Mr. Zimmer, tries hard. I try hard. Sarah tries hard, and France, and yourself, John, and members of the government. Everybody tries hard, but we're not one of them. We don't live that experience.

If you want to talk about farming and you want to make a meaningful conversation about dairy farming, talk to my friend John Vanthof, or talk to others who are farmers. They will bring light to the issue, and they will help direct us to make better decisions.

If you want to talk about issues of northern Ontario and francophones, or mining and forestry? Hey, come and see me. That's where I'm from. That's what I do. That's what I'm best at.

I try real hard on the First Nations file, and I've had some successes over the years, but I'm not one of them. So that experience of that woman who came to me and said, "You know, I went to Waskaganish and I finally got some treatment, and now I'm a better person and I'm able to deal with that, and my family has been able to heal"—I think that's a pretty telling thing. If we had had representatives here a long time ago, as we tried to figure out how to respond to the crisis in Attawapiskat, or Pikangikum, or wherever it might be—and as we know, we go through this quite often—they could have helped us direct what types of responses were necessary to deal with those issues.

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That's just one example, in my view, of why we fell short on this particular legislation, where we should have created those two northern ridings where they would be in the majority. We created one where they're somewhat of a majority, at 60%, which is a good thing, but then we end up in a riding where they are not in a majority in the northeast. They use this number that the First Nations are 30% of this new riding; it's a lot less than 30%, and I'll tell you why. There are essentially 11 polls that represent the First Nations communities of Constance Lake, everything going north, up to Peawanuck. There are 11 polls. That new riding will have about 70, so it means to say that 55, 58 polls will be a francophone, European mix of some type, mostly, and there will be 10 or 11 polls that will be First Nations. So the prospect of electing a First Nations person is going to be pretty minimal.

Think about even just the nomination process for our three parties. If you're trying to sign membership up to be able to win the nomination so you can even be the candidate, you have a far better chance of doing so on Highway 11 than you do up in the James Bay, just by the very nature of people being much more politicized to the political party process on Highway 11 than they are on the James Bay, and it's just a lot easier to get around, sell memberships and motivate people to come to a nomina-

tion meeting to vote for you. Even the party processes, I think, will fall short in being able to assist a First Nations person to even get the nomination.

I've had in the time that I've run one candidate, Leonard, who ran as a First Nations candidate for the Liberals about three, four elections ago. Unfortunately—well, I'm happy I got re-elected, don't get me wrong—he didn't get elected. It's a hard thing for a First Nations member because Leonard knew nobody outside of—he knew a couple of people in Timmins, and I don't mean that in a disrespectful way. But Leonard didn't have the connections with people in places like Timmins, Hearst, Kapuskasing and Smooth Rock Falls that I had. He was from Moosonee, Moose Factory. He had a good connection up there and he did well there, but he was not able to win down south because he wasn't from there and didn't have the connections.

Again, what I asked the government to do was a way of trying to fix this. That would have been—and the government can still choose to do that if it wants by not calling this vote tomorrow and instead just saying, "You know what? We're going to put this whole thing on hold and we are going to go out and consult with the First Nations in order to come back with a boundary, through the electoral boundaries commission, that redesigns the map in a way that gives First Nations a majority in both of those ridings." I doubt very much that's going to happen, because the government already voted against such an amendment at committee. What I had suggested is that we do that and hold it in committee rather than order it back to the House.

The last thing I want to touch on is just the lack of fairness of this thing. I'll just end on this point. Our First Nation members are infinitely more patient than probably anybody else in this province. We keep on dropping the ball when it comes to responding to their needs. Yes, they're disappointed; they get disappointed like everybody else, but they're always prepared to stand and put a hand out and say, "Let's work together. Let's try this again."

This legislation could have gone a long way to assist us to build that relationship that this Legislature needs, to build a relationship with First Nations so that they could be true partners in the governing of this province and they could have a real effect on the issues that affect them and the communities they would represent.

Grand Chief Stan Beardy told me something one time, and I took it as a bit of a wakeup call. I said to him, "Grand Chief, we're very fortunate here in Ontario, in Canada, that your people are infinitely more patient than we are, because most of the people in our communities, if they were treated in the way First Nations were, wouldn't put up with it. There would be some kind of political action that would give cause to change the process." We go through these crises from time to time, and far too often, unfortunately, with First Nations. Great attention is given that we're going to do something for them, and then once the cameras are moved away, things go to a dull roar once again and they're left sort of holding the

bag. So I said to Grand Chief Beardy, “We’re so lucky that you’re patient.” He said, “Gilles, my generation and the one behind me are patient, but wait until the young ‘uns come up. They don’t have the patience that we do. They want to see action now.” And if we don’t get this right as an older generation, the generation coming up behind us—and we’re not talking millennials, we’re talking people younger than that, and they’re making up now a larger percentage of the population. I think it’s something like 40-some-odd per cent of the indigenous population in these communities are under the age of 18—under the age of 18. So Grand Chief Beardy warned us and said, “Be careful, because when they start getting to the age of political maturity and taking over the leadership spots and being the decision-makers, we are going to be in a very different situation than we are now.” So we have this generation to fix it. After that, it might become somewhat dicey.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to again say I will vote for this legislation only because it creates two ridings in northern Ontario. But I don’t want anybody to think that I’m voting for this because I think it’s a good deal for First Nations, because I, quite frankly, think that we’ve left them short and that this was a disservice to the First Nations, and we should have done the right thing and instead we did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I’m happy to have 20 minutes this afternoon to speak to Bill 152. The intent, of course, is to add two northern ridings, going from two to four. I have been in the Legislature this afternoon, Speaker, for a little while, and I have heard some of the debate on the legislation from both the PC Party and from the third party and heard some of the—I guess it’s fair to call them criticisms of the legislation or parts of the legislation that perhaps they would have changed and done differently. But I don’t know if the intent of the two opposition parties is to support the legislation or not. We’ll find out, I suppose, in due course.

But I think, at the end of the day, it’s important to simply remember that even though there may be some concerns and qualifications about parts of what we are attempting to do here, it seems like this will improve and make the situation better than it was.

As part of the debate that I’ve been listening to this afternoon, I’ve heard a number of references to the plight and difficult circumstances that many First Nation communities find themselves in. I don’t think that anyone actually expects that this particular piece of legislation was going to change that directly and specifically. The goal of the legislation, clearly, is to get more direct representation for people who live in Far Northern communities. As I said at the beginning, whether or not you think the legislation is perfect, the goal to provide more direct representation for these communities, I think, will be achieved, going from two to four, should the legislation pass.

I was here earlier, Speaker. I had to leave for a while and go downtown for a bit, but I came back and I heard

parts of the speech from the official opposition. It was interesting—and I think it bears repeating, because it’s obvious; I don’t know if anybody else has said it yet, but while there was some criticism in the remarks from the member of the Conservatives—I think he did an hour on it, and that’s fine. He qualified, he said it’s not perfect—I don’t know if he’s going to support it or not. As I’ve mentioned, the goal here is to add two northern ridings, and if passed, that’s what this will do: provide more direct representation.

You can’t help but mention, and some will remember and certainly I will remember, that it was the Conservative Party that reduced northern representation from 15 ridings down to 11. So that change happened under the government that preceded us, under the Mike Harris government, and people can have their own opinions on whether or not that was the right thing to do, but the point is, it went from 15 seats down to 11. So I couldn’t help but consider that policy choice by a Conservative government when the member from the Conservative Party was finding some way to qualify, to criticize, this particular legislation that’s going to bring it back up by two seats, should it pass.

I would add as well, Speaker, an expression of our support for northern representation, as a government, that this is not the first step that we’ve taken in that regard. As I’ve mentioned, northern representation had been reduced by the previous Conservative government from 15 to 11 seats.

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There were boundary adjustments. The federal government brought in new boundaries. If we had followed those federally redistributed boundaries—I forget when that happened: 2006, 2007, 2008, whenever that was—northern Ontario would have lost a further seat. We would have gone from the 11 which we had been brought down to by the Conservatives to 10. But we made a decision as a party, and as the government, that we legislated that we would never go below 11.

I can’t help but put those comments on the record. When I heard a bit about—as I said, I was not here for the whole speech, but I heard some of the criticism from the member of the official opposition. I think it’s worth repeating that it was that party that took us from 15 to 11. We said, “We will not.” We legislated it not to go below 11. We kept it there; we didn’t follow the federal redistribution, and we are now bringing forward legislation that will increase that by two. At the end of the day, whether or not you want to qualify this in some way, shape, or form, I think most people will see it as a good step forward.

Part of the issue, Speaker, is the narrative that as northern members, it doesn’t matter who’s in power; it doesn’t matter who’s in government. If you’re a northern member, you will generally be fighting against a narrative that took hold in your communities decades and decades ago, and that is that northern Ontario is always, sometimes, most of the time disregarded, forgotten about, not thought about or an afterthought when it comes to the

issues, the debates and the decisions that are made at Queen's Park.

It doesn't matter who you are; I think that you probably feel that, sense that, hear that, read that on a far-too-regular basis. It does not seem to matter what you do. It does not seem to matter what resource, investment, policy change, infrastructure, health care advancement—you pick a policy file; it doesn't seem to matter what you do as a northern member. There are some people who just feel that, and quite frankly, I don't think you're ever going to change their minds.

I think it's understandable that people are going to feel that way. When you're 1,500 kilometres by car, like my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan is, away from the seat of power in the Ontario government, I think it's understandable that people are going to feel that way just by virtue of the distance and the geography that separates us. I don't think there's much that you're going to be able to do about that. Some people will always feel that way.

I sit back and I think about it. I've had—I say it often—the great fortune of not only being elected by the constituents of Thunder Bay–Atikokan in four consecutive elections to represent their communities—Oliver Paipooonge, Conmee, Neebing, O'Connor, Gillies, Atikokan, Thunder Bay—but doubly so to be in government for that period of time. Through the course of that time and over that period, I have had what I feel is a great opportunity to impact the communities that I've had the pleasure to represent, and to bring forward some real, serious, big policy considerations that have made life better for people right across northern Ontario. And I say that, understanding and knowing that no matter what I do or what I say, there are still going to be many people in northern Ontario, and in the riding that I represent, who don't feel that it's the case.

As a northern member, what is it that you do? What is it that you say? Well, there are some people who won't change their minds. It's not my goal to try and change their minds. It's simply my goal and my effort to continue to represent the people of my riding and, as a Minister of Municipal Affairs and as a Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry previously, to do what you can to bring forward policy initiatives that help not only your constituents in your riding, but there are many examples I would say that have helped people right across all of northern Ontario.

By way of example, Speaker, let me just mention a couple of things. Back in 2005, the forest industry was, I would say, the canary in the coal mine when it came to the economic recession that landed on our doorstep two or three years later in 2008. The forest industry, as most people may know, is a major component, if not the biggest component, of industry and employment in northern Ontario. In my hometown in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, in Thunder Bay, we lost six mills in a very short period of time—major employment losses. Of course, as government you were blamed for that loss. It was a weak, hollow, vacuous, empty argument that was made to try and lay the responsibility for the loss in the

forest industry at the feet of our government and on me and others as local members.

Nevertheless, it's an emotional time. People have lost their jobs. So you understand that some people are going to believe and think that. To this day, there are probably some who believe it, even though in the other two major forestry jurisdictions—Quebec and BC—as many jobs were lost in those forestry jurisdictions as there were in Ontario. Should that be the subject of a debate in here one time, I will lay out exactly why that argument was absolutely ridiculous, vacuous and empty and nonsensical. But that's not the point today.

The point today is, as a northern member speaking about adding northern ridings and northern representation, what did we, as a government, do in response to that crisis—completely unrelated in any way, shape or form to any government policy that we'd brought forward to that point? We brought forward somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion in supports. In my community to this day, Resolute Forest Products is operating a pulp and paper mill in Thunder Bay. They have a sawmill in Thunder Bay. They have a pellet plant in Thunder Bay. They have a sawmill in Atikokan. They have a brown-field site in Atikokan and a redeveloped sawmill in Ignace.

I think I can say, without absolute certainty but with some belief, that if we had not brought forward a suite of significant supports for the forest industry, it's entirely possible—entirely possible—that that particular operation and all of the people it employs in Thunder Bay and in the region—and that those supports applied right across northern Ontario—some of those forestry operations that still exist today would not be there. They, I believe, absolutely would not be there.

One specific example on the forestry support side was the forestry roads program. It was indeed a program that had been in existence, but under the third party, when they were in government from 1990 to 1995, it stopped. They had their own reasons. They stopped it in about 1992 or 1993. The official opposition then had government for eight years. They didn't bring it back. This issue, in 2005, lands on our step.

Speaker, the point simply is this: That without—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping that we could hear the relevance to the piece of legislation that we're debating this afternoon, if that would be at all possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member's remarks have to be relevant to the bill. I do find that the Minister of Municipal Affairs' remarks are relevant to the bill and ask him to continue.

Hon. Bill Mauro: The point, Speaker, is absolutely this: That as an expression of support for northern Ontario and there being little, as I said, under the two previous governments, this policy piece in and of itself, out of that \$1 billion, over the course of the last number of years, has put about \$700 million back into that

industry to support them through some very challenging times. Of course, we are in another very challenging time when it comes to softwood lumber and the NAFTA negotiations. The challenges never end.

Having said that, Speaker, this is only one small expression of a support piece, and this is me trying to say, how do you ever fight back on that narrative with people in northern Ontario who feel they're forgotten when it comes to decisions and policy-making at Queen's Park? It's a very, very difficult challenge. But our forestry supports were only one of them.

One of the biggest issues—and there are a number that are of critical importance to people in northern Ontario—is our highway system. I use northern highways as an example again of supports from our government over a number of years to express, like we are here today with legislation that, if passed, will bring forward two new northern ridings, another example and expression of support for our understanding of the need for good highways in northern Ontario. I've said this before in the Legislature, I say it in my home communities of Thunder Bay–Atikokan and when I'm travelling on a pretty regular basis: Before our election, the single high-water mark for money expended on northern highways in the province of Ontario—the high-water mark, as explained to me—was somewhere between \$200 million and \$250 million; an annual number, not one project. The aggregate, the highest high-water mark spent on northern highways right across northern Ontario, was \$200 million to \$250 million.

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Shortly after coming to government, we increased that number. I think our high-water mark was somewhere in the order of \$750 million in any one year. This year, I think the number is something like \$630 million on northern highways, and people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, in places like North Bay and in places like Sudbury, don't have to look very far to see and understand and find examples of that investment: North Bay, Highway 11 four-laning; Sudbury, Highway 69 four-laning; Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North, Highway 17 four-laning, between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

There is still lots of work to do, with a long way to go on northern highways. Why, in my mind, the federal government, historically—not sounding partisan in the least—has not been at the table with a succession of provincial governments, helping us when it comes to investments in the highway system in Ontario, as has occurred in other parts of the province, is difficult for me to understand. I think if the federal government would come to the table in a greater way, like old agreements say they should, I think that we could accomplish even more on northern highways than we have to this point—even though, Speaker, as I've said, our investment in northern highways has been historic. It absolutely is historic, and the examples are easy and tangible for people to see. And so I've raised the examples. That's one more expression of what it can be when you're looking to support northern communities.

One of the other topics and examples that I would use, Speaker, to show a commitment to northern Ontario—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe the member for Thornhill has a point of order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I'm just counting the number of members in the House and it looks like we don't quite have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Could the table ascertain as to whether or not we have a quorum in the House at present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: One of the other examples that I would use—this is a bit more parochial, a bit more about Thunder Bay, but it does in fact service a very broad district in the north—is certain health care services that heretofore did not exist in northern Ontario. Since 2009, at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, we have been providing—and it's interesting that I have to talk about these things, because many of them are pieces that folks from southern Ontario and other parts of the province take for granted and don't think twice about. But up until 2009, if you needed an angioplasty service, you had to travel to southern Ontario. You didn't get that service in Thunder Bay. We've been providing angioplasty in Thunder Bay now since 2009. That is eight years and counting. About 700 people per year are receiving that life-saving service in their home communities, with their families by their sides. They don't have to be air-ambulance out of the city. Some of them did not make the trip; some of them didn't survive the trip. Now we get angioplasty provided at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. This is a major, major move.

Up until January of this year in Thunder Bay, you could not, in the history of our community, get vascular surgery—hard to imagine. We've heard, in the context of this bill, of a number of health care provision services that are not available across the north. You couldn't get vascular surgery in Thunder Bay up until this year. Angioplasty is providing a service to about 700 people a year. Vascular surgery is expected to provide a service to about another 400 people a year.

On top of that, in 2020, we have publicly announced and committed to the provision of full cardiac surgery out of Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. When that is up and running in the spring of 2020, it's expected that about 600 people a year in the district of Thunder Bay—because Thunder Bay Regional is a regional hospital that services many communities in a vast swath of northern Ontario—another 600 people a year will be able to get that.

That is 1,700 people who will no longer have to leave their home communities in northern Ontario and will be

able to get that life-saving service in Thunder Bay—it will save lives, provide better health outcomes and emotional supports—and not have to utilize a northern Ontario health travel grant.

By the way, Speaker, as many people in southern Ontario will be aware, health care has a big economy attached to it. The provision of those services in Thunder Bay is currently already providing anywhere from 50 to 60 big, solid, well-paying health care jobs. When the cardiac surgery comes online in 2020, it will add, I'm told, another 60 to 70 big, solid, good-paying health care jobs.

My 20 minutes here today is almost up, but I do want to conclude by saying that while some have found some cause to criticize the legislation here today—Bill 152, that would add two northern Ontario ridings—it will be interesting, I think, at the end of the day to see whether or not the opposition stand and support the legislation.

I remind people that it was the opposition that reduced northern representation from 15 down to 11, and that it was our government that passed legislation to ensure that it could never go below 11. We did not follow federal redistribution; we kept the 11 ridings and legislated it could never go lower, and we now find ourselves here with legislation, Bill 152, that is completely committed to trying to increase it from 11 back up to 13.

I have provided a list of supports and investments. This is one more example of an expression of the support of northern Ontario from our government.

Speaker, I thank you for my time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that the House has allocated for this debate.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 28, 2017, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Naqvi has moved third 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? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice of deferral of this vote from the chief government whip, pursuant to standing order 28(h), requesting that the vote on third reading of Bill 152 be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, October 24, 2017.

Third reading vote deferred.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Citizenship.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You would have to seek the unanimous consent of the House to put forward a motion.

Agreed? Agreed.

Minister of Citizenship.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6, when the House adjourns on Thursday, November 2, 2017, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 14, 2017.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Albanese has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 6, when the House adjourns on Thursday, November 2, 2017, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 14, 2017.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1640

STRENGTHENING PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ONTARIENS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts and to enact three new Acts with respect to the construction of new homes and ticket sales for events / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et édictant trois nouvelles lois en ce qui concerne la construction de logements neufs et la vente de billets d'événements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Before I start my hour lead, I'd like to welcome Willy Noiles, who's a good friend of mine, to Queen's Park. Willy, thanks for seeing you again.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Give him a big round of applause, yes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to rise today and speak to Bill 166. I'm sure my colleagues have realized there's quite a bit in this bill, so I'm going to do my best to speak to a few parts of it.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, houses are popping up left, right and centre. I think people have been listening to what I've been saying about Niagara in this chamber, and they decided to move down to Niagara.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm just saying.

That has had a few effects. Some of them haven't necessarily been great. For instance, the price of houses has skyrocketed, and that has had an effect on somebody owning a home, if you're a young person.

It's what happens when young people in Niagara don't have work they can save money with and plan on retire-

ment. It's why I've been here speaking in favour of things that bring good jobs to Niagara, like getting our hospital built with local workers, local businesses and local suppliers, and protecting the automotive industry and tourist sector. This has also created a situation where more and more are being drawn to Niagara, and for some of these people, that meant buying a home.

This summer, I was canvassing in a new subdivision in Niagara Falls, just off McLeod Road. At some of the doors, I was hearing first-hand experience from my own constituents as to what a nightmare they were experiencing when it came to Tarion and home warranties. At one of the homes where I knocked on the door, they'd been fighting for over two years to get things done for their home. Can you imagine spending \$400,000 on a new home, and you've got to fight to get it fixed?

I've seen people stranded and stressed out because they're trying to get Tarion to work for them like it's supposed to. Instead, it looks like Tarion is working for the big developers and big builders. If anyone is listening—sometimes that's tough in here—let me make this clear: In this House, I'm on the side of the residents of my riding who feel like they've been ripped off. So when I see this bill, I want to make sure that the consumers are present, that people don't feel ripped off anymore.

Tarion was started to help people who might have defects with their homes—so they could buy a home and know that the product they were getting was safe. Instead, you can check my Twitter feed—and I know you all do—all day, and see that there are people across Ontario who are outraged by what's happening.

The government will say that they're fast-tracking the Tarion complaints, and in fairness, that may be true. Largely, it seems that this has come about because of a Toronto Star investigation which found that consumers were having to go to unimaginable lengths to prove that the deficiencies in their homes were caused by the builder.

Some people may be happy to see that their issues are finally being addressed, but it leaves a big question unanswered: What about all the people who feel their claims were ignored or improperly shelved? What options exist for those people who feel that they have already been burned—over and over, by the way—by Tarion?

Of course, they, like so many people, want to see Tarion completely reformed to benefit consumers. Imagine that: benefiting the consumer, the person who's buying the home. But where does that leave them? They're nowhere in the announcements and nowhere in this legislation, so some people out there—a great deal of money, and of course they've been living with the stress of having to fight. Some of that fight goes on for years. What is this government going to do to help them?

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this government appointed Justice Cunningham to review Tarion and to provide recommendations, if they were necessary, to fix the situation. Justice Cunningham did just that. He did his

job. Justice Cunningham took the job seriously and did his job. He provided—listen to this—37 recommendations in his report that outlined what the problems were and how we should go about fixing them. That's a well-researched road map on how to address this issue, and I was hoping this government would use that road map in Bill 166. I have a lot of concern that the great deal of work done by Justice Cunningham has not made its way into this bill.

It's certainly true that a few of the changes made in this bill come from Justice Cunningham's report, but in no way do all of the changes come from that report. In fact, many of the most important changes suggested by Justice Cunningham are missing. I know that a number of consumer advocates—and a few journalists, by the way—have pointed this out. I believe over the next hour, I'll be able to point out some of what's missing as well.

I'd like to be clear about what's at stake here. I'm going to repeat that again so people hear it: I'd like to be clear about what's at stake here. When this legislation was first brought in, it was designed to protect home buyers, and that's a good thing. That's something we should absolutely support. For residents in Niagara and right across Ontario, it's the single biggest purchase they'll ever make in their lives. They're going to live in these homes for decades. They're going to raise their children under those roofs.

We have had issues where people have had mould growing on their ceiling because of water leaks in their new homes. They are struggling to get that repaired. Think about it if this was our home, MPPs. Can you imagine having your family living in a home with mould? When they've had a long day at work, they want to go home and relax. They're going to host family dinners and spend downtime in these homes.

In 2015, the Toronto Star reported on a case involving a man named Sydney Walters. Sydney bought a home in 2004 that was built in 2002. This really jumped out at me: When the Toronto Star found him, he was sleeping in a tent in his backyard because the mould in his house was so bad. It's pretty sad, really. It turns out that the builder never insulated the attic, and it completely destroyed the home. Sydney was being bankrupted by the costs of trying to pursue this in court. Meanwhile, his wife and child were sleeping on a couch in a small apartment one street over. I'm not making this up; this was reported in that Toronto paper.

If someone has to sleep in their backyard because the mould is so bad in their new home, how can Tarion reasonably be doing their job? What are they ensuring if someone can't live in the house they bought practically brand new? Simply put, it's one of the most important decisions a person can make in their lifetime, and they shouldn't have to go through this.

When this bill was originally passed, the intent was to ensure that people have insurance for when they buy a new home. It's meant to ensure that people have the ability to buy a home and feel comfortable that if something goes wrong, they will have their issues addressed

and, at the end of the day, fixed in a reasonable period of time. Quite frankly, I don't believe that's a hard concept to understand.

1650

There are all sorts of purchases made where insurance is fair and it works. If a product has a defect, you can get it fixed. Yet in the province of Ontario, we have residents coming forward and saying that that didn't happen with their homes—which, again, is the most important purchase we'll make in our lifetime.

Then there's the case in 2015 of Urbancorp. Urbancorp was taking tens of thousands of dollars in deposits from people to build new condos. In January, Toronto Life followed the story of Patrick and Jessie Hooker and a number of other families. These families put their life savings—in the case of the Hookers, \$58,000—into a deal with Urbancorp to build a new condo. Then they got the news that Urbancorp was going bankrupt and that their money wouldn't be refunded.

When you look at Urbancorp or cases where builders are going bankrupt and don't actually provide the homes they said that they would build, Tarion has almost no power. They can't refund more than \$20,000 to condo owners. They can't make these companies turn over the books. That one entity that is supposed to protect people buying condos, Tarion, falls short of its abilities. How can people feel safe and secure when they see, time and time again, that Tarion can't actually protect or insure them?

We have a very big opportunity to fix this and finally get it right, to fix all the concerns that this government has heard over the last 14 years—we've all heard them, not just the Liberals; I'm sure the Conservatives have them coming into their constituency offices as well talking about homes that have problems; I have lots in my riding—and to ensure that people feel comfortable when they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new home. In some cases like Toronto, and other places in the province of Ontario—but certainly Toronto jumps out at you—homes here can cost over a million dollars very easily.

I worked with my staff and the staff in our research department to go through this bill page by page and schedule by schedule to see what the end result is going to look like. One of the major things that the bill does is split Tarion into two separate entities. One entity will be responsible for home warranties and the other will be responsible for regulation. This portion was in Justice Cunningham's report and it makes sense.

But as always, the devil is in the details—or, in this case, the lack of details. There's nothing in this bill that explains how we get from the situation we have today to the situation where we have two entities that are separate. It never explains what will ensure that these entities are actually separated and what their composition will look like.

The government says that they're in the process of consulting on this to get the details. I'll read that again, because it kind of blew me away: The government says

that they're in the process of consulting on this to get the details. Well, they've had 14 years to get the information they needed. Why don't they have the details now? Why are they unsure how this transition will take place? I'm asking the government that. You can answer that for me. That's the issue at hand here.

Mr. Speaker, as you'll see, many of the provisions in this bill say that they will come into force “on proclamation,” not upon royal assent. The viewers at home might not understand and are probably thinking, “Well, what's the difference?” Well, when it comes to laws in this House, if it has royal assent it becomes law and comes into force right away. In other words, the bill gets passed and it's done right away. When it says “upon proclamation”—and this is the part that's really concerning around Tarion and this bill—it's left up to the minister to create the proper regulations and then bring it into force. So today, we don't have a breakdown of how these new entities will come into existence, what the defined role will be, the separation between the two or who exactly will be on the board. Who will even appoint these boards? That's an important issue. Simply put, there's no transition plan—none. This bill empowers whoever is in power to make these decisions when they come into power. Let me read that again because it's kind of a play on words. This bill empowers whoever is in power to make these decisions when they come into power. It doesn't even make sense when I read it twice.

Mr. Speaker, if you read between the lines here, they haven't finished their supposed consultation, and they don't believe they will do it in time for the next election that occurs. Think about that: 14 years in power and we still need more consultation, as homeowners have been fighting for years. No urgency—nothing.

That means this bill empowers the ministry, but without the details that will take time, and looking at this time frame, I believe this government has given itself room to not change anything until the next election—and that will rest with whoever is in power then. You should come out and tell the homeowners that: the people who have mould, the people who have their roofs leaking. All those things should be told to them in advance—that this bill means nothing because it's not going to get passed before we have an election.

So why are you doing it? You do this because you have no intention, and there are not a lot—I don't know if I can say this, Speaker; you can correct me if I'm wrong. There are not a lot of Liberals here in the afternoon. I understand that; they're busy.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can't refer to members' absences in the aggregate or individually.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. I'll retract that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara Falls has the floor.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I wasn't sure. I'm glad you're listening; I appreciate that. Thank you.

You do this because you have no intention of changing Tarion, and you want to look like you're effect-

ive heading into an election. That's my major concern about the lack of details in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other issues that has drawn my attention is the lack of a designated consumer advocate or the requirement that the boards which are created actually have consumer advocates. This is one of the biggest issues raised by the consumer advocate groups that have sprung up across the province. It was talked about in Justice Cunningham's report. That's not in the bill. Nothing in here provides for a mandatory appointment to be a consumer advocate. The question we have now is, why not? Why is there no mandatory appointment for consumer advocates? Somebody tell me that. I don't understand why there wouldn't be.

According to a 2016 report, Tarion collected nearly \$53 million in enrolment fees, which are ultimately paid by the consumer. When you look at the claims it actually paid out, there's a major difference between the two numbers. And again, the question is, why? Where does the money go?

Well, part of it—not all of it, but part of it—goes to the average compensation at Tarion, which is about \$100,000 a year. That may or may not include the unknown amount going to Tarion's CEO, COO and the nine vice-presidents. Do you see the structure there, Mr. Speaker? Nine vice-presidents.

1700

According to the advocates group Canadians for Properly Built Homes, consumers also face high-priced lawyers hired by Tarion to fight consumers when they appeal the denial of their claim to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. The very Tarion that's supposed to protect me, the consumer, who bought the house, is hiring lawyers to fight me as I have mould in my house, as my AC is not working, my fridge doesn't work, or the floor is rotting away. That's amazing to me. A tribunal, where, by the way—listen to this; I know my colleagues from the NDP want to hear this—nine out of 10 times, consumers lose their cases.

If you're a home builder, this is great news. Even if you lose at the appeal tribunal, Tarion will hire a high-priced lawyer to fight a consumer to return your money to. And who is that money going to? When you look at things like that, it's clear to me that we need a consumer advocate. As it stands today, Tarion has a builder arbitration forum where builders can appeal Tarion's decisions—think about this—quickly, cheaply and without going to the Licence Appeal Tribunal, and yet, no such thing exists for consumers, which in our case is the homeowner; I think we all understand that.

Mr. Speaker, think about that. Builders get a mandatory seat at the table, yet no seat exists for consumers. If Bill 166 passes as it is today, no such seat will exist for consumers, and it's not spelled out if that seat will be taken away from the builders. The builders, essentially, have their own backdoor process by which they can appeal Tarion, yet consumers—residents in my riding and in every MPP's riding in the province of Ontario—don't have the same access. Don't you think it would be

fair if they both had the same—I'm just asking; I keep hearing this "fairness" word here at Queen's Park all the time. Wouldn't it be fair that the builder has a process, the consumer has a process, the home builder has a process and the community has a process? "Oh, no, that can't work. You can't have one for the homeowner—that doesn't make sense—just for the builder." Are you kidding me?

The imbalance is easy to understand. It's laid out there for anybody to see. Why? Bill 166 has such a major opportunity—there's an opportunity here to actually fix this for consumers and to create a fair and balanced process. I'll repeat that. I like that: create a fair and balanced process.

Mr. Speaker, we need strong advocates on the board of the new entities which fight for the rights of people that Tarion was originally meant to serve, because that's what Tarion was supposed to do, and we all know they haven't done it. If anyone wants to disagree with those claims, then I ask why they didn't support a bill put forward in 2013 by my former colleague from Trinity-Spadina, or a similar bill put forward by my former colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Jagmeet Singh—and we should all congratulate Jagmeet for being the new federal NDP leader. Congratulations to my good friend Jagmeet. You'll do a great job. Their bills put Tarion under the oversight of the Ombudsman.

If Tarion was supporting residents, then open up their books and prove it. In fact, I see nothing in here that brings the new entity under the Ombudsman's oversight of those previous two bills passed. These are public entities, but they're not crown corporations. They're entitled to take money from residents, but that money isn't public and they never need to worry about anyone auditing their books. How can anyone support keeping the Ombudsman out of this? Don't we want financial accountability? Don't we want reassurances for residents who are worried about Tarion?

Mr. Speaker, Tarion remains a delegated authority established by the government, with the power to create its own delegations without government approval. Think about that. Because it's a private corporation, the Ombudsman has no power to investigate that. These are original problems with Tarion, and I fear that they are not solved by Bill 166.

If the minister is so serious and plans to actually address these issues, why not address the root cause of these issues? It's not going to be difficult. The position of the internal ombudsman is still included, despite that position being one of the things that receive the most complaints. If that kind of oversight won't happen, then Bill 166 needs to stand up for consumers and put them first. As you can see in this bill, that's not mandatory at all in Bill 166.

This bill gives the minister a lot of power. It gives the minister the power to appoint a board. It even allows them to appoint the chair of the board. Imagine the confidence they can inspire in new homeowners across Ontario if they appointed a consumers' rights champion

to chair these boards? Why do they not have equal representation? It is possible, but it's not mandatory and it's not spelled out in the bill.

It's also not clear if the Ontario Home Builders' Association will be stripped of its power given to it under Tarion bylaw number 1 to appoint half of its board members. That's not there either. It's not clear in the bill exactly what would happen under bylaw number 1. If that says the builder will be able to appoint half of the board and the consumer none, what do you think is going to happen? Home builder half; homeowner none: Is that fair? Is that balanced? I would have said no, it's not. If that ends up being the case, then we're not solving the issues at all, are we?

It's not even clear if existing agencies will play a role in this new board. When we asked in the briefing, the staff did concede that it's not impossible that Tarion, as it already exists, could play a role in this, and I'm sure that's what's going to happen.

As you may know, this government struck an advisory panel when it came to this legislation. On that panel, acting as a consumer advocate, was a woman named Barbara Captijn. Barbara claims she offered a number of suggestions to the board in a way that would make it better for consumers, for the homeowner. Now, I don't know Barbara, but she has copied my office on a number of open letters to the minister about Tarion, and I'm going to read this quote to you because it caught my eye, and I want the minister to hear this:

"Premier Wynne and Minister MacCharles, as the only consumer advocate in your 11-person working group, I strongly and repeatedly voiced concerns about ignoring the judge's review, limiting the scope of discussions, and weighting the participants to favour Tarion and industry interests. I am told I was 'heard,' but nothing was done.

"Builders got what they wanted in this bill: their own regulatory authority. Tarion got what they wanted: to keep its powerful monopoly with minimum oversight. What meaningful protection did consumers get?"

I'm asking the Liberal government that. When you rebut this, please answer that question. What did the consumer get? What did the homeowner get with what you guys did here? What did they get?

"You say nothing will be implemented until at least 2020." You're saying that. "Regulations will take even longer. What of the consumers struggling under the current weak legislation? This ignores the urgency of these problems and leaves consumers to deal with 40-year-old legislation which doesn't protect them in their biggest investment" in their lives, and that's buying a home. That's a quote from Barbara.

1710

Again, as I illustrated with the Toronto Star—Barbara—this isn't just me saying this. These are people that live and breathe this nightmare over and over and over again. They want you to fix it.

I know the minister responded with what looked like a form response, talking about Bill 166. But I'm not sure that responded to Barbara's concerns about her ideas not

being accepted. Perhaps they have and I just haven't seen it yet. I don't know. But I don't believe you have.

If that's the case, then there is a serious problem here. If the only consumer advocate on the advisory committee is publicly stating that and she is doing it publicly, what action is the government undertaking to address those concerns? You have lots you can talk about in your two-minute hits. Why are they not acting to address the points Barbara raised? I think that would be fair. I think that would be balanced. Because if consumer advocates have those concerns now, they have had them long after the bill passed.

Instead of going further down the road, let's get and solve this thing the first time. Mr. Speaker, I hope builders won't take this as an attack on their industry. I understand—I want to be clear on this—I understand there are a lot of good builders out there who hire good tradespeople and who do the best work they can. I think consumers who get good, sturdy houses are thankful for them. I know, when I was canvassing in the summer, I came across a woman who had just moved to Niagara Falls. When I asked her why she bought a house in the area, she told me she loved her builder so much that she wanted to buy a house that he made. To me, it's an expensive way to show your appreciation, but it does exist. There are good home builders.

I personally know many home builders, and they're good people who take pride in their work. So it's not about attacking home builders; it's about fairness. If there is going to be a group that oversees home building, both the provider and the consumer, then that body that governs them should be fair, should be balanced. If there is going to be a builders' advocate, there should be a consumer advocate. Everybody agree with that? I think that's pretty simple.

If there is going to be a builders' appeal tribunal that's quick, that's easy, that's affordable, then there should be one for consumers as well. As you go through this, you can see it's balanced, it's easy, it's fair. It's fair to the builder and it's fair to the homeowner. Isn't that what we want? Isn't that why we put bills together?

But let's be clear: Sometimes there are bad builders. I gave you an example in here of a builder who took people's money and then walked away. It's unfortunate, but it's a reality. For whatever reason, corners are cut out there, and there are bad relationships.

We need to make sure we don't hand over control to one interest group over another. There has to be a fair process. If you can see—I've gone through probably half of my time here—I'm talking about being fair. Fair for both parties: fair for the home builder, fair for the consumers and their families. People shouldn't have to fight for two or three years with Tarion and then end up going to court. It makes absolutely no sense to me in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there are real people's livelihoods at stake here. Like I said, there are a lot of good builders. There are ones that are not so good. Take an example of a case that we reported last Thursday in Peterborough. A

group of people paid a company to build their new homes. Each couple paid the company \$40,000 in a deposit to build their homes. When it came time to move into their property, they found out that the homes were never built, and the builder might not even have obtained building permits. It's happening in the province of Ontario. So now we have families who have already sold their homes, and they have nowhere to live, and very little recourse.

This is a real thing that happens to real people. How do they get their homes? How do they get their money back? Who's standing up for them? Now they've turned to Tarion, and that may be just as nerve-racking for them as what they went through when they found out their homes were never built.

The group Canadians for Properly Built Homes has provided literally hundreds of cases where Tarion has refused to protect consumers—hundreds of cases. Not only am I getting them—people may not know, but this is really a new critic job for me—but Jagmeet was getting them long before me, and I'm getting them every day. And if I'm getting them, I believe that the Conservatives are getting them and I believe that the Liberals are getting them. We've got an obligation to fix it, and we've got the opportunity to do it here.

There are cases where people have found faulty HVAC systems or massive cracks in their infrastructure. They have cases where Tarion had stood shoulder to shoulder with developers and fought consumers in court.

I'd like to read the story of one particular bad case that was documented in the Toronto Sun by another NDP MPP, who is not elected any longer:

“One such home buyer told me he was dropped by his home insurance company after Tarion refused to fix water leakage into his brand new basement that caused mould and fungus ‘the size of pizzas.’

“Then his bank refused to renew his mortgage without insurance. Eventually”—Mr. Speaker, do you know what happened?—“he lost his home.”

How awful is that? Imagine being in that situation, any one of us.

We've got issues where Tarion has offered people dimes on the dollar in compensation. Imagine if you bought a fridge for \$900, and you bought a warranty on that fridge. You get home and you plug it in, and it doesn't work. So you decide to take the fridge back to the hardware store, and they tell you they're happy to give you \$90 of the \$900—10% on the dollar. Would anyone here think that's okay? If it's not okay for a purchase at \$900, why is it okay for a \$300,000 purchase? To me, it makes even less sense.

The stories aren't hard to find. It's why people are so passionate about this issue, and why they are so passionate about this particular bill. They've been down this road before, and they realize now is their chance to fix the number of things that are wrong with Tarion.

I'm going to read this again, because I want everybody to listen to it, because I think this is fair and I think it's balanced: They've been down this road before, and they

realize now is their chance to fix the number of things that are wrong with Tarion. I believe we've all got an obligation to do it.

Mr. Speaker, anyone following the complaints raised by residents will come across a similar one, time and time again, and that's the builder registry. In the past, it has been very clear that the builder registry hasn't been updated, it hasn't been accurate and, in some cases, it may even be misleading. Why is this the case?

You hear stories of people buying homes and then finding out that their builder has had a number of complaints of non-compliance or poor performance that were reported to Tarion but never added to the registry. So Tarion knew that there was a bad builder out there; Tarion knew that someone was building a home that had lots of non-compliances, lots of deficiencies, but they never told that homebuyer who was putting down \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000 or \$600,000 on that home. Tarion should have had an obligation to do that.

1720

What is happening? Who is Tarion protecting, the consumer or the builders? To me, that's an important question: What is Tarion's role? Is their role to protect the consumer or the builder? Or is it better that they work to make sure that the consumer is taken care of?

To me, it seems like one of the easiest things this bill could fix. When it comes to transparency, this is a no-brainer. Requiring a builder registry to be published on time with accurate and timely information would make sense. Yet that's missing entirely from this bill.

I am going to ask the Liberals again, why is it missing? Why is it not in here? Why are we not protecting homeowners? Why did the government fail to address the issue about the registry? There's no requirement that a builder or a vendor's refusal to honour its warranty will be published on the registry. Why would anybody support that? Why would anybody on that side of the House support that?

This is not the first time this issue has been raised. In 2013—and I'm giving lots of examples here, but it's because there are so many of them out there—a Toronto Star investigation found that Tarion did not disclose its records of risky builders to consumers. This shouldn't be happening in any community anywhere in the province of Ontario. Why are we protecting Tarion? I don't get it. This was brought to the government, who said that they would fix the situation. Then, in January 2014, it was reported that the new and improved Ontario Builder Directory was even worse than the original one. I can't make this stuff up. You can all read this stuff; all you have to do is look for it.

This was something Justice Cunningham also complained about. So you're not just hearing it from me; you've heard it from Justice Cunningham. This isn't secret stuff, but it's important to say it in this House so people in Ontario get the representation they deserve and so that their homes are taken care of when they have deficiencies. Again, these complaints aren't new. They are years—years—in the making. Then, when you have a chance to fix it, you leave it out.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're paying attention. They left it out—hard to believe.

You make some rules that may one day allow for this to be changed in regulation, but you put it into a bill that likely won't have any teeth until after the next election. In fact, in an interview with the *Toronto Star*, the minister said herself that she didn't see this being fully implemented until 2020. The minister said that; not Wayne Gates. My question is: Why? Why wait so long, and why pass a bill that will take so long to be implemented?

There's going to be an election in eight months. I don't know if anybody has heard that, but—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: When?

Mr. Wayne Gates: About eight months. This party may no longer be in power—we don't know that. If this is such, why put a bill forward so late? Even worse, why put a bill forward that fails to address the directory, one of the biggest issues raised when people talk about Tarion? If you want transparency and accountability, fix this issue. It would be one of the easiest things to do. It's easy to do. So I leave it to the residents to ask why the government left it out.

I've mentioned it a few times but it's worth mentioning again: Why did this government drag its feet for 14 years? Why did they only introduce this legislation now, and why does it sound like it won't be implemented until long after the election is over? And if that's all true, then this is nothing more than an attempt to kick the can further down the road and ignore the issue.

I don't want anybody laughing or smiling about this, because I am serious about this. People are putting their entire life into buying a home. When their home is falling apart and they go to look for the people at Tarion that are supposed to take care of them, and they don't, that's a crisis in that family—a crisis in how they're going to live. Does anyone think it's right that if my house falls apart I've got to live in my backyard until Tarion gets it fixed? This is serious, and you have an opportunity to fix it once and for all. You should do it. We should all do it. And we should demand that you do it.

There's a very vocal group out there called Canadians for Properly Built Homes. Their president, Karen Somerville, is one of the people who has been consistently trying to get answers out of this ministry. I follow a lot of the very good work they do, and I'd like to quote something they wrote on Facebook about a petition to end the Tarion monopoly:

"I suspect that with the modest changes that Tarion is making or has made over the past year or so, Tarion wants us to be convinced that they are making great progress in reform. Meanwhile, the Ontario government is moving at a snail's pace to make changes and controls the agenda according to their priorities and crisis management. I think we need more MPPs involved agitated by their constituents...." That was on Facebook by her, and I agree with that. I agree that more MPPs need to get involved. More MPPs need to take note of this.

I know my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry was at the briefing and that he has been taking

notes on this issue as well. I also know a few other MPPs in this House have raised this issue in their constituencies, but quite frankly, more voices need to be raised.

Now is the opportunity consumer advocates have been fighting for. Now, unlike before, there is actually legislation in front of this House—there is an actual framework to finally fix this mess. My colleagues need to read this legislation. They need to go to their ridings and speak with people who are struggling. Maybe then we can actually come together and put together a bill that has a true framework and a true road map for how we get from where we are today to where we need to be.

This bill says that the minister could appoint an existing corporation to be one of the new providers. How do we ensure this won't just be Tarion? How do we ensure that the new corporations will properly protect consumers?

How do we ensure that one interest group doesn't overpower the other? That's what has gone on, by the way, for the last 14 years. One group has more power than the owners. There's no doubt about that. Nobody can deny that. That's what has gone on for a number of years.

How do we ensure that the books are transparent and accountable?

We do that by mobilizing MPPs to speak out and stand up. This bill will still go to the committee stage and there we can add amendments that can make this bill transformative. Instead of kicking the can down the road, we can address these issues as a House now and make this legislation work. Instead of turning this into an election issue, we can help people out there today who are ready to give up because of this. But like that petition says, MPPs need to get agitated. They need to get angry. They need to find a reason to speak out on behalf of their constituents.

There's also a very interesting point that was raised to me about the surpluses that Tarion is sitting on. The consistent mismatch between fees collected and claims paid has led to an incredible surplus at Tarion. In fact, the last number I heard was that Tarion was sitting on a \$542-million surplus.

Tarion, of course, has warranty liabilities that cover claims that could be made in the seven-year warranty coverage period. But even that is only estimated to be \$239 million. In other words, Tarion has banked more than twice as much homebuyer money than it actually thinks it needs. Even worse, based on actual payouts made by Tarion, even the \$239 million is too much. Tarion's current surplus is over 60 times greater than the amount of the net claims it actually paid out last year—60 times. Don't get me wrong. They need to hold money to ensure that insurance claims can be paid out, but clearly Tarion isn't using this money for that.

There's nothing in this legislation that talks about or that provides that Tarion could be regulated to use that money in an appropriate fashion should they find themselves with such a large surplus.

First of all, to me, and I am sure to all my colleagues, it's a big red flag when Tarion is banking that kind of

money. Why aren't homebuyers getting it back? If we have consumers saying their claims were never paid, and then we have Tarion with a huge bank account, it's not hard to put two and two together.

1730

So with a bill like this, I think there's room for discussion here. If Tarion goes down this route and has hundreds of millions of dollars in surplus, how can we take that money and use it to benefit consumers? What is the best way forward for that? I have no doubt in my mind that there are a lot of people out there who could comment on that, so I'd like to leave that thought with the minister. I would like the minister to think about something in here that addresses the issue of major surpluses.

The new conciliation inspection fees put Tarion fees at over \$1,000 when consumers buy a home. We are not talking about pennies here. This is big money that means a lot to families who are trying to buy a home. That's money that people want to see accounted for and used properly.

Mr. Speaker, you can see how big a subject this is and why this bill falls short. People have been waiting over a decade—over a decade—for meaningful and large legislation that will finally address this issue, the same reforms spelled out step by step by Justice Cunningham in his report. But this bill doesn't contain that. It contains a loose framework which I truly believe will not be acted on until the next election.

Mr. Speaker, we have a chance to do the right thing here and put in the time to properly fix it. This is just one aspect of home ownership. We have got a lot of people out there who are buying homes for the first time—quite frankly, our sons, our daughters and our grandkids—and we owe it to them to deal with this burning issue. There are so many other aspects to home ownership we can't even touch on, because we are spending our time trying to get this right.

For example, home inspections: I think we all heard the stories that can come along with home inspections. Again, the majority of inspectors are good, honest people, but that's not always the case. Sometimes it's things like not telling residents about fire hazards. In one set of really bad cases, I just read about a home inspector not revealing that someone's home had previously been a grow op, which had caused severe damage to the structure. That probably happens quite a bit in the province of Ontario.

You can see we have lots of work to do, and we can't do it if we're arguing about this. But we can do this right, and we can stop arguing about it. Tarion has clearly been an issue. It has been in the media, it has been brought into our constituency office and it has been raised consistently for the past 10 years. That much is clear.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a limited amount of time here, so I'll move onto another part of Bill 166, but if you're looking for my thoughts on the Tarion portion, it's simply this:

(1) Outline the path forward and make it happen before the next election;

(2) Make consumer advocacy a mandatory part of any change; and

(3) Take this opportunity to get it right in one shot.

I believe that's a reasonable ask. I think it's fair, I think it's balanced and I think it's needed in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, another portion of the bill which draws my attention is the part that deals with ticket pricing. You'll be surprised at this comment, but I'm old enough to see how the industry has changed over the last few years. I can remember years ago—and I'm aging myself, by the way—when you used to be able to go and get a deal at the local grocery store that gave you tickets. I remember going to the A&P when I was first married, with my two daughters. If you spent \$10 on groceries, the A&P would allow you to buy Blue Jays tickets at the old Exhibition Stadium for \$2. Anybody here remember that? Where's Mr. Miller? He'd have to remember that. I remember doing that.

Concerts were the same. You waited in line, and so as long as you put your work in, you got your tickets. Well, it's not like that today. It absolutely isn't. We hear stories of people waiting online and seeing entire venues being sold out in two minutes. Then ticket resellers get their hands on those tickets, and they jack up the prices.

Mr. Speaker, if you read the New York Times last week, they had an article about Bruce Springsteen's show on Broadway. Bruce is playing a show with limited seating, but he is selling tickets through a random draw for \$70, which is good. People were getting them and reselling them for close to \$10,000, which is terrible. He's trying to protect the average person who just wants to see their favourite artist. I think that's the spirit of what we're trying to protect. People shouldn't have to break the bank or leave their families at home if they want to see a baseball game or a concert. I see some provisions here which may address this.

One of the things it's looking to address is the amount of tickets that are sold or reserved before tickets go on sale to the public. I know we were looking at some hockey games, and we were told that upwards of 90% of those tickets were already sold or promised out before the first ticket even went on sale. Some of that stems from the fact that professional sports have season ticket holders, whether you're a Leafs fan, Argos—I think there's lots of Argos seats, but it's the same thing: They still have people who have season tickets. I'm an Argos fan, so I think I can say that.

If companies are going to do that, they should reveal that to the public. If a company believes they can sell their tickets out from underneath their fans, then they should make that public and let the public decide if they want continue to go to that event.

My colleague from St. Catharines—who I know quite well—spoke about this last week, referring to an Elton John concert in St. Catharines. It's going to be a huge concert for the city. Quite frankly, it's a huge concert for all of Niagara. A lot of people from Niagara Falls, my riding, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake will want to go

and see Elton John. When you get a name like that, it's good for local business, the local restaurants, and it's good for people who are working there. It's really good for everyone. That's one of the reasons we pushed so hard to have a new Niagara Falls entertainment centre. Do you know what we found? It's being built by local workers, local suppliers and local businesses, which is great.

Bringing in a big name like Elton John is a driver for economic activity. In our case, when they come to see a mega-act like Elton, they're already in a tourist destination. They can stay for the concert and also see some of the number of other attractions we have. Instead of people going into a city and leaving the same night, they stay two or three extra nights. In the case of the Falls, we have a world-class hospitality industry—in my opinion, the best in the world. People are able to go to concerts and then head down to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where they try some of the best wines in the world, or they go to the Fort Erie Race Track or to the fort. Of course, who doesn't want to stay in Niagara Falls? There's weeks' worth of things to do—come and see your favourite MPP.

When the member from St. Catharines was talking about the Elton John concert, he was talking about the tickets. Local residents struggle to get them because the bots, or computers, buy them instantly before fans get a chance. The next thing you know, they're selling for 10 times the price. This keeps locals out and the average worker not able to afford them.

There's also an economic impact to this. If folks feel they are being gouged, they're less likely to stay in the area and contribute locally. If they're losing money on tickets, how can they afford a hotel room or an attraction for their kids? If we make the tickets affordable, we can ensure that the money goes into our local economy instead of some ticket-scalping company somewhere else in the world. If you think about it that way, getting tickets to people is not only the right thing to do, it makes economic sense.

Without transparency in this sector, we can't address this issue. We hear about bots buying and selling tickets but never know how much.

Just yesterday—I'm really excited about this, and I did try to get tickets—tickets went on sale to see Bernie Sanders here in Toronto. They sold out in three seconds. And this is a part I want to read, because I think you'll enjoy this. I know my friends in the PC Party weren't buying these tickets, because he's coming here to talk about universal programs and fighting for union rights. So I know they won't be there. I know that's something that the PC Party wouldn't be interested in.

1740

I want to say that, and the Liberals aren't getting off the hook on this one either. It's the end of my hour here. All I know is, my friends in the Liberal Party weren't buying his tickets because he's here to talk about large corporations paying their fair share and giving that money to working people. But there's a lot of people who

want to hear and see Bernie speak, and I'm one of them. I'm told the tickets sold out in three seconds. I think we have to tell him he needs to come to a bigger place.

We've got to make sure that people have the right to get tickets. They shouldn't have to go to a Blue Jays game or a soccer game—soccer's big in Toronto right now—and be gouged with their tickets. There should be a formula in place that it's affordable for families. I support that part of the bill.

Thank you very much for listening for an hour. I appreciate it. Mr. Speaker, thanks for correcting me; I appreciate it. Thank you very much. Have a great day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to make a few comments in relation to the remarks made by the member from Niagara Falls. It sounds, overall, like he's going to be supporting this bill.

In relation to his comments regarding Tarion, just as he has had to do, I've had complaints from my constituents and I've had to advocate on their behalf, both with Tarion and with the builder. Certainly with that first home, in the case of this townhouse development in Markham where there were a number of problems, these were individuals who had saved up, were very excited to move into a new home and were really not getting a good response either from Tarion or from the builder.

Of course, with Bill 166, Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, we are making really substantial changes to protect people. As the Honourable Douglas Cunningham said in his report, a public review of Tarion, he did perceive a conflict of interest in the current structure that leaves homeowners vulnerable. So the first step is to provide for two administrative authorities: one to administer the new home warranty program and one to regulate new home builders and vendors. This is a large undertaking. We intend, of course, to strengthen the regulation of new home builders and vendors. We're giving the government responsibility in making rules and setting standards, and we're going to make the dispute resolution process easier for homeowners if they discover a problem in the construction of their new home.

So it is timely to renew and refresh this consumer protection legislation. I think this is an excellent bill, and I'm very optimistic that all sides of the House will feel able to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It was a pleasure to hear the member from Niagara Falls. I listened intently through the hour. He went through quite a rendition of the different issues that would be affected by this bill.

I see there are a number of acts—it's going to affect at least five. The bill talks about implementing long-overdue reforms to do with home building and new home warranties.

One of the failures we see is—to implement some of the more sweeping suggestions of Justice Cunningham.

We are pleased to see that the authorities will have Auditor General oversight and a mandatory internal ombudsman. That's all got to be good. The new provisions would allow the minister to appoint an administrator.

It also touches on ticket speculation. The member did mention about some concerts and other events that he'd like to see, and obviously protection for consumers, which we do need, as certainly has been indicated by a number of stories in the media recently.

Real estate disclosure: We are trying to do additional disclosure requirements for realtors and brokerages—and also representing the issue of a realtor affecting two different parties in a transaction.

Also, as I already indicated about a person when they are buying a home of their dreams, they should have some protection to be able to go back if there are issues with it.

I guess the travel industry is also affected in there.

I did want to comment that I probably won't be buying a ticket to see Bernie Sanders any time soon, but I'm sure that when the member does go, he will have a great time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Niagara Falls on his one-hour lead on this bill. He actually made it very interesting to listen to him.

He made a comment about, "Come to Niagara Falls. It's a great place to go and check out your favourite MPP in the riding of Niagara Falls." He certainly is one of our favourite MPPs here on this side of the House, in our caucus, because he always brings, really, his constituents' perspective to bills.

One of the things I did want to talk about and touch on, of course, is Tarion. Currently Tarion Warranty Corp. is both the regulator of new homes and vendors as well as the administrator of the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. As the Minister of Community and Social Services pointed out just now, Justice Cunningham found that there was a conflict of interest. I don't think you have to go very far to come up with that conclusion, with the structure that Tarion had. When one agency has authority over builders, vendors and warranties—it's disappointing that it took this long to actually have that come out.

The new provisions under this bill will, of course, enable legislation to have a regulatory framework so that there's a governing body for new home builders and vendors. Bill 166 is going to establish a new delegated authority to regulate the builders and vendors while leaving Tarion in charge of the warranty program.

We know there have been problems with the warranty program. I hope this bill is actually going to fix the issues that consumers have had. Your home is your castle, and when your castle is leaking and you can't get it fixed, that's a real problem. So I hope that this bill is actually going to do what it's intended to do and help consumers when it comes to repairs under the warranty of Tarion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 166, Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017.

If Bill 166 is passed, it would introduce rules to better protect consumers buying travel services, event tickets and buying or selling real estate, including buying newly built homes. Our government is focused on building a fair, safe and informed marketplace for Ontario consumers. We want all Ontarians to be well protected and well informed in the marketplace, whether they're making a small or a major purchase.

Whether it's booking a much-anticipated vacation, buying tickets to see their favourite band or buying or selling a house—our government is committed to protecting Ontario consumers. That's why we've created this comprehensive piece of legislation that, if passed, would strengthen consumer protection.

Mr. Speaker, one of the bigger portions of this bill has to do with real estate, and more specifically the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. That has to do with enhancing rules surrounding multiple representations by a real estate professional or brokerage, and it would allow for more stringent fines for violations of the code of ethics by salespersons, brokerages or their companies.

The other major part of this bill has to do with renewing the new home warranty program. This has been long called for. As with many of my colleagues in the House, we receive numerous complaints. I'm hopeful that with further consultation on this bill, we will be able to better protect Ontario consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Niagara Falls for his response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate all my colleagues talking on the bill, but I'm going to talk to the minister because she was here for the whole hour, and I appreciate the fact that she listened to what I am trying to say. I want to congratulate her for being here.

The reality is that we have to find a way to protect owners of homes. It hasn't been happening for over 14 years. We need to make sure that we get this right. We've got to make sure that, as we go forward, the recommendations that were put forward by Justice Cunningham are here too.

1750

We've got to make sure that it's fair and that it's balanced. As I see Bill 166 today, it's not fair, it's not balanced and it certainly isn't taking care of homeowners who are spending all their money—in some cases, their life savings—on finally owning a home in the province of Ontario.

It's got to be fixed. We have to make sure it gets fixed. I'm going to continue to raise this issue all the way through the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to speak for a few minutes on a portion of the bill which I think is very important, and that is ticket speculation.

Gone are the old days. I remember going to see a Maple Leafs game at the Gardens. You would buy tickets from scalpers. They would sit outside there, and as you walked towards the entrance to Maple Leaf Gardens, they'd say, "Tickets for sale, tickets for sale," and you'd just work out a price with the scalper.

But times have changed, so our government decided to get involved. We're going to change the rules so that fans in Ontario have a real, fair shot at getting the tickets they want, while making sure that ticket prices are not overinflated.

We heard about this issue regarding ticket sales across the province. We launched an online consultation that gave fans a chance to provide input on how they would like to see the ticket laws changed. We had input from over 34,000 fans and dozens of entertainment industry people by developing a survey online and getting the results there.

The proposed changes will protect consumers by making buying and selling tickets fairer and more transparent.

This all started a while ago. Last year, the member from Kingston and the Islands, Sophie Kiwala, brought forward a private member's bill to stop what we call bots. They're automatic programs that would buy up the tickets once they came on sale and resell them for a higher price. The member brought forward this bill because many fans wanted to see the great Canadian band The Tragically Hip on their last tour—I guess it was a farewell tour—as they performed across Canada. People tried to buy tickets and were frustrated by the fact that the tickets were purchased within seconds and resold at a higher price, an inflated price. This upset a lot of fans who wanted to go see the band. Not everyone has got a lot of money. They went on sale for a certain price, and when the computer program would purchase the tickets and then sell them again, it would be at an inflated rate.

That was the start of what forms part of this bill on ticket speculation. The proposed changes would prevent unfair and excessive markups in the ticket resale market; increase transparency in the ticketing industry; prevent ticket fraud and other deceptive activities in the ticket industry; and strengthen the enforcement of Ontario's ticket laws.

So we are responding—and it's not only for that concert. There are a lot of events that happen—concerts and performers here in Toronto and elsewhere down-

town, for example. People want to go see them and pay the proper price, and not have to pay an inflated price.

I just want to mention that we had round tables here in Toronto and in Kingston. As well, we had targeted stakeholder consultations with industry, venues and artist representatives. Every stakeholder will agree—Ticketmaster, StubHub, MLSE, Live Nation, the symphony, Mirvish etc.—that we consulted heavily. We also hosted a series of expert round tables: 90-minute sessions with detailed questions, plus pre-meetings and post-meetings.

It's clear that the people of Ontario and the industry are engaged in this important issue and that they're ready to see some changes. We're using their feedback and have proposed some parts of the law here that hopefully will allow members of the public to purchase tickets without having them overinflated so quickly.

If a computer program gets in there when the tickets go on sale, purchases a bunch of tickets and then resells them, it's not fair. It's not fair to the consumers, and it's not fair to people who want to go and see the concerts, or even those who perform. They don't want their fans coming in with inflated prices, where the profit goes to certain companies or individuals who decide to come forward and purchase the tickets.

There are a few other points I wanted to make.

I remember a personal experience of my own, going back several years ago, when Paul McCartney was performing in Toronto. I wanted to go see the concert. I was at an event downtown, and I had to stay at the event, but I was able to get down to the Air Canada Centre. The scalper said, "You want to buy one ticket?" The concert had already begun, and he put out an outrageous price. The ticket was, like, \$60, and he said, "You want to buy it? It's \$350." I thought, "Really—\$350?" and he said, "Well, it's Paul McCartney." But we negotiated a price—I don't remember what the price was—just so I could go see him and his band perform.

Times have changed. We've got the electronic industry which buys and sells tickets. This bill will change that.

That's all I really have to say right now. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (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	
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	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
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

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
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
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
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Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley