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Jeudi
23 novembre 2017

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 23 November 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CANNABIS, SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AND ROAD SAFETY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017**

**LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CANNABIS,
L'ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
ET LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE**

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to enact the Cannabis Act, 2017, the Ontario Cannabis Retail Corporation Act, 2017 and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, to repeal two Acts and to make amendments to the Highway Traffic Act respecting alcohol, drugs and other matters / *Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le cannabis, la Loi de 2017 sur la Société ontarienne de vente du cannabis et la Loi de 2017 favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, abrogeant deux lois et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne l'alcool, les drogues et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 22, 2017, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Cannabis Act, 2017, the Ontario Cannabis Retail Corporation Act, 2017 and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, to repeal two Acts and to make amendments to the Highway Traffic Act respecting alcohol, drugs and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

This will be a—oh, sorry. There will be a vote after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 23 novembre 2017

**BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES
AND CONSERVING WATERSHEDS
ACT, 2017**

**LOI DE 2017 VISANT À BÂTIR
DE MEILLEURES COLLECTIVITÉS
ET À PROTÉGER LES BASSINS
HYDROGRAPHIQUES**

Mr. Mauro moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts / *Projet de loi 139, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Tribunal d'appel de l'aménagement local et la Loi de 2017 sur le Centre d'assistance pour les appels en matière d'aménagement local et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature et diverses autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Mauro.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to begin our government's one-hour third reading leadoff this morning. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry as well as the Attorney General.

Before I get into the body of my formal remarks, I'd like to just make a few comments. I want to begin by thanking a number of people, like the member from St. Catharines and a number of our other members in the GTA who held their own meetings on this very significant piece of legislation relative to the Ontario Municipal Board. I think the Speaker held her own meeting in her riding and, I know, a number of our other members: Arthur Potts, Chris Ballard, Han Dong, Cristina Martins, Peter Milczyn, Reza Moridi, Laura Albanese—the list goes on of our members on the government side of the House who held meetings in the GTA on the OMB reform, in addition to the work that had gone on around the province, where we had 12 or so—I think 12 on the nose—ministry-led information sessions relative to this legislation, including one in my hometown, in my riding of Thunder Bay.

This was a big piece of work. I want to thank my staff on this—my chief of staff, Brent McCurdy, and my senior policy lead on this piece, Josh Arnold—as well as the Attorney General. We worked very closely on this legislation over a significant period of time. This was a long and sometimes difficult journey. At the end of the day, as with most pieces of legislation, not everyone is necessarily happy with the final result, but that is the order of the day, I think, when it comes to legislation.

The Ontario Municipal Board and the newly named Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, should the legislation pass—is a very significant piece of the land use planning system for the province.

As I said, while everyone may not be satisfied with where this finally landed, I would say to those individuals or stakeholder groups, to the opposition, to anyone who has an interest in this—and I would think that everybody in southern Ontario, specifically, would have an interest in this. Something that always guided me as a principle as we went through this work is the fact that four million more people are expected to arrive in the GTHA by the year 2041. The population of the region is somewhere in the order of magnitude of about nine million people, and they expect it will exceed 13 million people by 2041. That in and of itself should be enough to inform people that good land use planning is an absolute necessity. If the only criticism that can be levelled is that we didn't get it exactly right, it doesn't diminish the necessity for the exercise to have been undertaken. For those people who have an interest in this, and for those people who live in this region who are here now for their kids and their grandchildren—who they will want to live in this region in the future—this is an absolute planning imperative. We need to absolutely do our best to get this right.

It touches on a host of issues, like the preservation of agricultural land and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are associated with that industry and food security. It touches on climate change. It touches on transportation gridlock and good planning investments in infrastructure. It touches on pollution. It goes to so many individual issues—water security, clean water, the quantity of water. The list goes on and on. All of these things could be negatively impacted if we do not get this right. And you only get one chance. I think even those who may be opposed to some of the reforms that we're bringing forward understand that the exercise is necessary, even though they may not find it to be exactly what they would have liked. I think people know that this is necessary and it's the right thing to do.

If I can begin the formal remarks, I'm happy to stand here to begin third reading of the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, known as Bill 139. As I mentioned, I'll be sharing my time with Minister Yasir Naqvi, the Attorney General; the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Kathryn McGarry; and the member for St. Catharines.

I'd like to take a moment to extend my gratitude to the Premier, my fellow cabinet members and to my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, who undertook the review of the OMB with me. I'd also like to extend, as I already have, my thanks to my staff and to everyone who has weighed in since day one of the OMB review. Your input has been instructive and appreciated. I'd also like to thank those who recently provided feedback to committee either through a presentation or a written submission.

The bill we have before us for third reading is stronger and more responsive to local needs. Effective land use

planning is essential in every Ontario municipality. The Ontario we build today will determine the communities we live in tomorrow. We need to do our best to get this right. We need to ensure fairness for all involved: local politicians, city planners, residents and builders.

We need to build more complete communities that offer more options for living, working, learning, shopping and playing; complete communities that reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a greater range of transportation options; complete communities that provide housing options to meet the needs of people of any age; complete communities that work to revitalize downtowns so that they become more vibrant and link people to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, public service facilities and a full range of housing. It's also vital that we curb sprawl to protect farmland and green spaces. Achieving these goals will promote efficient, long-term economic growth.

0910

At the same time, Ontarians should be able to count on a land use planning and appeal system that's efficient, transparent and predictable, one that gives residents and municipalities a say in what is built in their neighbourhoods.

The Ontario government has taken several steps to reform our land use planning system to achieve these goals. These steps include changes to the Planning Act related to land use planning appeals, and Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, which gives municipalities better tools to fund growth and protect and promote green spaces, and provides residents a more meaningful say in how their communities grow. The bill made the development charges system more predictable, transparent and accountable, and it made the planning and appeals process more predictable. Lastly, Bill 73 gave municipalities more independence. It allowed more opportunities to resolve disputes locally without going before the Ontario Municipal Board.

These measures have improved the system, but we want to make it better.

In my mandate letter, the Premier tasked me with leading a review of the OMB with the Attorney General. My ministry and the Ministry of the Attorney General began this review in the spring of 2016. The review focused on the scope of matters the OMB adjudicates, and its effectiveness.

In the fall of 2016, we released a consultation document that included a range of potential reforms. Through the consultations, we received more than 1,100 written submissions. We also held several in-person consultations. More than 700 people participated in the 12 town hall meetings we held across the province.

It's clear that the OMB generates a lot of interest and debate, but overall, there was a general agreement about the need to make improvements.

We also heard some common themes. Many people said that too many land use planning decisions are appealed, resulting in costly hearings and too many delays. In addition to concerns about outcomes, we heard con-

cerns about the process. Individuals and groups told us that it's far too difficult for residents and community groups to participate in the process, while development groups seemingly had unlimited resources to pursue appeals.

There were legitimate concerns about fairness. Many also said that the OMB process had become too intimidating and that hearings go on for far too long. There was also a real desire to tone down the adversarial nature of the hearings.

We heard a lot of different views; we listened. We agree that the current system needs to be changed. We believe the changes we are proposing would help to address many of the concerns that Ontarians have raised about the current land use planning appeal process. That's why we brought forward this legislation.

As Minister of Municipal Affairs, I am pleased that the reforms we are proposing would give more deference—this is one of the underpinnings of the work—to municipal decisions. The reforms we are proposing would give communities a stronger voice in the land use planning process, and give more weight to local and provincial decisions. Getting the appeal process right will support growth and help us build communities that work for people.

Without these reforms, we would continue to see appeals that frustrate municipal planning work, appeals that prevent us from implementing provincial land use planning policies in a timely way, and appeals that hamper our ability to protect agricultural lands and natural areas and that overturn community-based plans. Frankly, the status quo is not an option.

I'll now get into key aspects of this proposed legislation in greater detail.

Firstly, the new Local Planning Appeal Tribunal would replace the Ontario Municipal Board if the legislation is passed. The proposed legislation would also reduce the number of appeals heard by limiting what could be brought before the new tribunal. The bill proposes changes that would, if passed, also make the appeals process shorter, less costly and less adversarial. This would happen thanks to the introduction of deadlines throughout the process, including:

- requiring the tribunal to hold a case management conference for major land use planning appeals, to identify and narrow the scope of the appeal and to explore opportunities for mediation and settlement, which could avoid the hearing process altogether;

- establishing clear timelines for the hearing process so people can get a better sense of how long it would take;

- creating statutory rules regarding the conduct of hearings, including setting strict timelines for oral hearings and limiting evidence to written materials in major land use planning appeals;

- eliminating lengthy and often confrontational examinations and cross-examinations of witnesses by parties and their lawyers at the oral hearings and instead empowering the tribunal to examine the parties and anyone else who appears; and

- providing the tribunal with modern adjudicative powers to promote active adjudication, provide for alternative hearing formats and permit assignment of multi-member panels.

The act will also establish the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, a new provincial agency, which will help Ontarians access information and advice about the appeal process. The centre will be modelled on the Human Rights Legal Support Centre and will deliver the following services free of charge to help people understand and more effectively participate in the appeal process, including: providing general information about land use planning; offering guidance to citizens on the tribunal appeal and hearing process; and providing legal and planning advice at different stages of the appeal process, which may include representation in some cases. We are also proposing to provide municipalities with more time to make decisions on some matters. We believe that by providing municipalities with more time to consult with the public and more time to negotiate locally developed solutions, we can avoid more appeals.

Taken together, these changes, if passed, would help bring development, including a range of new housing, to market faster by reducing the number of matters that come before the board. We believe that democratically elected local councils should have a greater say in land use planning decisions for their communities, and local residents have a better opportunity to shape their communities.

That's why we are reinforcing the municipality's role in the land use planning process by reducing the tribunal's ability to overturn municipal decisions. The proposed tribunal's jurisdiction would be limited—this is a key piece of this—to considering whether a municipal decision dealing with official plans and zoning matters is consistent and conforms with provincial and local plans and policies. This change would give more weight to key decisions made by municipal officials—officials who have been elected to serve in the interest of the communities they represent.

There will continue to be checks and balances. For example, if there is an appeal of a decision that doesn't align with provincial and local policies, it would be sent back to the municipality for it to make a new decision. The municipality would generally have 90 days to make this new decision to address the concerns of the tribunal. That second municipal decision would be final, unless it was appealed. If the second decision is appealed, the tribunal would hear the matter to determine whether the subsequent decision aligns with local and provincial policies. If it does align, the second municipal decision would stand. If the proposed tribunal found the second municipal decision again inconsistent or non-conforming with local or provincial policies, the tribunal would make the final decision.

Secondary or neighbourhood plans are a significant undertaking for a municipality. The development of these plans typically involves extensive community and stakeholder involvement, and a significant investment of time

and resources by the municipality and by local residents. The government proposes that no amendments be allowed to new secondary plans for the first two years, unless allowed by council.

We also propose to limit appeals of interim control bylaws. Municipal councils pass these bylaws to put a pause on development. This gives them time to do a study of particular issues or areas. We are proposing that there be no appeal of municipal interim control bylaws when first passed for a period of up to a year. Currently, interim control bylaws can be extended for up to two years from when first passed. That would continue, but extensions would be appealable.

Our government recognizes the importance of modern, accessible transit. We are investing billions of dollars to bring new transit options to Ontario's communities—and I might say that these investments have massively helped my home community of Thunder Bay, with about 1,200 new jobs at our local Bombardier plant. To help communities in the province make the best use of our government's transit investments, we are proposing a new planning tool that would allow municipalities to designate and zone protected major transit station areas. Municipalities could use zoning bylaws or a community planning permit system to determine where the density should go and what form it should take. That could include minimum and maximum heights, as long as the overall density within the MTSA is transit supportive. Municipalities would have to consult with the public and allow opportunities for input before they could make such changes to their planning documents. The province or an approval authority would approve these policies when they are being put in place and whenever they are being changed.

0920

When the municipality designates these areas, there would be no appeal of the official planned policies on the number of residents and jobs in the area or on building densities and heights. Once designated, the municipality could zone for density and height requirements meant to support transit service. This approach would provide the community with greater certainty about the kind of development that would be permitted. It would help facilitate transit-supportive densities, because municipalities and local residents would have a greater voice in how they achieve transit-supportive densities, and communities are more likely to support development that reflects their priorities and their concerns.

The next proposed change concerns local appeal bodies. Municipalities currently have the ability to establish local appeal bodies, and, in fact, they have had that capacity since, I think, 2006 or 2007. They can adjudicate certain planning matters rather than having them referred to the OMB.

A large bulk of planning matters in the city of Toronto, for example—60% to 70% about two years ago—were matters that could have been dealt with at the local level through a local planning appeal body. I congratulate the city of Toronto, that just this year has

established the first local appeal body in the province of Ontario. They can adjudicate certain planning matters rather than referring them to the OMB.

Right now local appeal bodies can deal with minor variants and consent appeals only. We propose to broaden that to include site plan matters as well.

To allow municipalities to exercise their greater decision-making authority and to allow for a more meaningful consultation with the public, we propose to extend the time frame in which municipalities and approval authorities must make decisions on certain planning matters. Currently, municipalities and approval authorities must make decisions on planning applications involving official plans within 180 days; that will be extended by an additional 30 days. On zoning bylaws decisions have to be made within 120 days; that will also be extended, up to an additional 30 days. Otherwise, the absence of a decision can be appealed to the OMB, giving more opportunity to work out issues locally and avoid disputes going to the proposed local appeal tribunal. I think this is a key change, as well, Speaker. We can all agree that settling matters locally is in everyone's best interest.

At the standing committee stage, we heard a number of individuals and organizations speak about the proposed changes. I would say that all parties brought forward a number of amendments that were quite similar in spirit if not in letter. Some stakeholders suggested the changes proposed in Bill 139 should be retroactive, while others are asking us that we transition all complete land use planning matters before municipalities.

In the coming weeks, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of the Attorney General will address the issue of transition by posting our intent on the regulatory registry and the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. We plan to find a balance between applying the new rules as soon as possible and ensuring fairness for matters already in the system, an approach that would help ensure the success of these reforms.

In conclusion, we have come out of the committee process, we believe, with a stronger piece of legislation, one that reflects the input of many people across the province. This government is committed to overhauling the land use appeal system and placing more decision-making power in the hands of local communities. The many changes proposed in Bill 139 will help us to do that.

Speaker, before I hand over the floor to Minister McGarry, who will provide further detail on other aspects of this proposed legislation, I simply want to add one more thank you to the list that I read out at the beginning, and that is to my parliamentary assistant, Lou Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland—Quinte West. Lou was very instrumental in helping us and guiding us through this process, as well, since it began in the spring of 2016, closing in on two years. I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to my parliamentary assistant.

I now yield the floor to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I have the honour of rising in my place today on behalf of the constituents I represent in Cambridge to speak to the proposed Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, or Bill 139.

As the provincial minister responsible for the management of conservation authorities, I'd like to once again speak to the conservation authority side of the legislation.

I did want to point out, too, that in the members' east gallery we have with us today the general manager of Conservation Ontario, Kim Gavine, as well as Dick Hibma, who is chair of the board, as well as my staff lead on this, Mark Tyler.

I did want to also offer my thanks to all staff who have assisted in bringing the bill as far as it has come. This has been a process of a couple of years of consultation throughout the province, as well as the development of the legislation. So I want to thank all of the staff in my ministry, and others: the municipalities, many of the communities that have weighed in on some of the matters relating to conservation authorities, and all those who have submitted comments and suggestions over the last few years in order to get us here to third reading.

I wanted to thank my colleague the former parliamentary assistant for natural resources and forestry, the Honourable Eleanor McMahon, who is now the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, because it was under her leadership that the conservation authorities review went forward. I also wanted to thank my colleague the former Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, who has just taken the lead role on the other part of the bill: Minister Mauro. I also wanted to thank my committee members, who worked hard at getting this through committee. The MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West, Lou Rinaldi, was leading that committee, so I thank him as well. It takes all of us working together to get it to this point, so I'm very proud to speak to it.

As you know, the proposed Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, if passed, would amend the Conservation Authorities Act to allow our province to have a modern framework to oversee the management of conservation authorities in Ontario. If passed, the proposed legislation would provide the framework for stronger oversight and accountability in conservation authority decision-making, increased clarity and consistency in conservation authority programs and services, increased clarity and consistency in regulatory roles and requirements, improved collaboration and engagement among all parties involved in resource conservation, and modernized funding mechanisms that support conservation authority operations.

These proposed changes would help protect and preserve our natural environment while balancing social and economic development in our communities. Passing this proposed legislation would modernize and strengthen the Conservation Authorities Act framework to meet the current and future needs of Ontarians.

For 70 years, conservation authorities have played a significant role in Ontario's natural resource management

landscape. Among other things, conservation authorities carry out programs that serve provincial and municipal interests, including natural hazard management, flood and erosion control, ice management, flood forecasting and warning, drought and low water programs, and clean water protection—something that's important to all of us in Ontario. As pressures on our environment increase, due mainly to population growth and climate change, we need to ensure that this valuable tool is modernized to meet all of these challenges. In order to continue meeting society's needs into the future, it's important for Ontario to have a strong, modern, effective and efficient framework for the management of conservation authorities. This proposed legislation, if passed, would allow for such a framework.

I'd like to remind you of some of the main features of this proposed legislation. If passed, this legislation would provide the framework for stronger oversight and accountability in conservation authority decision-making. This would be achieved by updating appointment processes and requirements and conservation authority governance practices, enabling the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to conduct program and operational reviews and confirming expectations for conservation authority restructuring decisions. The legislation would also provide the framework for increased clarity and consistency in conservation authority programs and services. This would be accomplished by clarifying the role of conservation authorities and expectations for provincially mandated programs and services; municipally assigned programs; and programs and services specific to watersheds.

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This framework would set the stage for increased clarity and consistency in regulatory roles and requirements. This includes clarifying the scope of activities subject to conservation authority approval and a conservation authority's review, updating compliance mechanisms and enforcement tools, and enabling the province to regulate other activities within a conservation authority's area of jurisdiction in the future.

This bill would also allow for improved collaboration and engagement among all parties involved in resource conservation. This would include increasing indigenous, public and stakeholder outreach and engagement. It would include indigenous community participation in conservation authorities. It would include collaboration between conservation authorities and the province, and also collaboration and engagement on service delivery standards.

Finally, the legislation would support modernized funding mechanisms that support conservation authority operations. This would include updating how costs are apportioned among participating municipalities, and increasing the clarity and consistency in the development and use of fees.

I would like to share with you a few examples of the benefits that would arise from these changes.

If Bill 139 is passed in the Legislature, the changes would balance the need for clarity and consistency in

conservation authorities' roles with the flexibility to update those roles in response to emerging challenges. For example, the science-based watershed management programs and services that conservation authorities currently provide will be increasingly required in the face of climate change and the resulting vulnerabilities to biodiversity and natural resources in the province. While there's a need to clearly define conservation authorities' current roles now, we expect that their roles will need to evolve over time, to meet additional demands and expectations.

The proposed changes would also strengthen provincial oversight and accountability while balancing local autonomy in decision-making. For example, my ministry would be able to conduct program and operational reviews of conservation authorities, while conservation authorities would be able to deliver a wide range of additional programs and services in response to local needs.

The proposed act would also allow for updated compliance and enforcement tools for conservation authorities. This would include increasing the maximum fines that can be imposed by a court upon convicting an individual for undertaking a prohibited activity or failing to comply with the conditions of a permit.

Finally, I would like to address opportunities to increase indigenous participation in conservation authorities.

While the current legislation allows for indigenous communities to join or establish a conservation authority as a participating member, no indigenous community has formally joined or established a conservation authority to date. However, there are examples of where indigenous communities are involved in conservation authority programs across the province.

A case in point: The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation partnered to undertake sub-watershed planning that would support the protection and the restoration of the local environment and ecosystem health. Although it was not a requirement, the First Nation requested that the Georgina, Fox and Snake Island sub-watershed plan be completed as part of the efforts under the Lake Simcoe protection plan.

This work, and the relationships established, can help to provide a foundation for collaboration between the conservation authority and the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation into the future.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is proposing to work with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and indigenous communities and conservation authorities to develop a framework for increasing the indigenous community participation in conservation authority programs and services.

If Bill 139 is passed by the Legislature, the changes we propose will create consistency of roles and responsibilities among conservation authorities and will strengthen public confidence in their decision-making. Many of the proposed legislative amendments are enabling only.

Should this bill be passed by the Legislature, some key changes would come into effect immediately, including a new purpose statement clarifying the role of conservation authorities and resource management. It would include enhanced authority for municipalities to appoint members and the ability for my ministry to conduct program and operational reviews.

A series of other changes would come into effect at a later date, including requirements for conservation authorities to update their administrative bylaws and make them publicly available, new regulations outlining expectations for the delivery of provincially delegated programs and services, and the strengthening of conservation authorities' role in protecting people and property from flooding and other water-related natural hazards. The proposed changes to the regulatory and policy framework will, of course, be subject to further public consultation.

This proposed legislation was a result of many months of co-operation and dialogue, as I outlined in my opening comments, and it was informed by an extensive and thorough consultation process. I'd like to again recognize the significant contributions made by those organizations that participated in our consultation processes and provided so many written submissions. They include conservation authorities; municipalities; agricultural, environmental and community organizations; industry groups; indigenous communities and the general public. They also include organizations like Conservation Ontario, representing the province's 36 conservation authorities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario; environmental stakeholders, including Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association; and Ontario's construction sector, including the Ontario Home Builders' Association. All provided valuable feedback on behalf of their members and thousands of Ontario residents.

Likewise, indigenous communities and organizations have provided meaningful input throughout the process.

During the recent Standing Committee on Social Policy hearings, we, again, heard from a number of individuals and organizations who provided their viewpoint and important information to this conversation. I'd like to share a few of their specific comments with you today.

Kim Gavine, the general manager of Conservation Ontario, told the committee that "Conservation Ontario supports the leadership demonstrated by the province in addressing the need to modernize the Conservation Authorities Act, and encourages the government to move forward with the passage of this bill."

She also said that the overall feeling around Conservation Ontario is that it's "very pleased with the proposed changes to the act" and appreciates that "the province acknowledges the broader watershed management role of conservation authorities and the effect it has on protecting the sustainability of our important natural resources."

She stated: "We also welcome the proposed improvements to governance and accountability. These will

provide a baseline standard for all conservation authorities, improving the transparency and effectiveness of our operations.”

Brian Denney, CEO of Toronto and Region Conservation, noted that “the proposed amendments ... build on and contribute to” the wisdom of the original Conservation Authorities Act.

Mr. Denney also said that the amendments “acknowledge that to succeed in resource management today, we also need to be addressing the current and anticipated challenges of climate change, both on the mitigation and adaptation sides,” and that “organizations that are empowered to do natural resource management need to be strategic and administered professionally, with transparency and accountability.”

Mr. Denney also said, “The proposed amendments to the CA Act will both enable and challenge CAs to continue to provide relevant services to the communities we serve. Equally importantly, the proposed amendments will inspire CAs to work aggressively to protect, restore and conserve the vital natural resources of our province for future generations.”

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Lynn Dollin, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario said municipal governments largely support the amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act. Ms. Dollin said AMO appreciates that the purpose of the conservation authority is clearly stated, adding, “The bill clarifies that there are regulated, mandatory activities of a conservation authority and that discretionary activities are to be by local memoranda of understanding with municipal governments on services and their costs.”

Ms. Dollin also goes on to say, “The bill” also “harmonizes the language used in conservation authority budgets and accounts with similar language used by other public sector organizations, such as for capital and operating expenses. This will increase transparency and the ability for the board to understand financial information in terms they already use.”

Finally, I’d like to share a comment by Mark Dorfman with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, which has 4,500 members that practise across the province in the public and private sectors. Mr. Dorfman stated the institute “supports the changes that are intended to clarify the conservation authority role and responsibilities with regard to watersheds, and we support the commitment that the ministry will phase in the implementation over a four-year period.”

Again, I want to thank everyone who took the time to appear at committee, who shared the feedback at that time. This draft legislation, if passed, is the first step toward attaining a strong and modern Conservation Authorities Act framework that would enable our province to better respond to the resource management challenges of today and tomorrow. I am very proud of the rich and productive relationship that Ontario and its conservation authorities have shared for more than seven decades.

I want to again thank everyone who brought to the table their ideas for making this proposed legislation relevant and responsive to our modern needs.

I encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of passing this important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further comments? I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 139. I would like to first thank my honourable colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for their tireless work on this very important piece of legislation. As you sort of heard—and you see the three of us saying it—it has been very much teamwork in terms of different elements of this very important bill.

I’m happy to rise in the House today to continue debate on Bill 139. I must say, though, that this is a fairly important moment for me as a member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa Centre, not only because reforming the Ontario Municipal Board was a major component of my mandate letter that was given to me by our Premier, but also because it is a very important mandate given to me by constituents of mine from Ottawa Centre. This has been an issue around land use planning, land use appeals and the Ontario Municipal Board that I have been involved in, working along with my community of Ottawa Centre, I would say, for my entire time that I have had the privilege to serve my constituents.

In fact, if I go back to around 2010, I had the great honour of organizing a very significant, thoughtful and thorough, I would say, town hall, a summit on the possible ideas around reform of OMB. It was very well attended by my community. We had community activists, we had a developers, we had lawyers who specialize in the area of development law attend that consultation. We had speakers from all those three groups present. We were able to really create, if I could say this, a safe space to have a meaningful and thoughtful discussion around what the challenges are, what the opportunities are, understand different points of view and come up with ideas as to how we can best accomplish reforming our land use planning appeal system. The by-product of all that work was a report that I was able to create, to draft, that came out of that discussion which then I started sharing with various ministers, going back to then-Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Kathleen Wynne, and others as to the practical ways we can reform the OMB.

Speaker, you can imagine now coming full circle, being in the role of the Attorney General—which I was not at that time; I was just a member of provincial Parliament for my community. To be able to do that work on behalf of my community has been personally quite rewarding for me.

There were a few things that we had outlined in that document; which, by the way, was part of my own local campaign commitment to my community in the 2011 election, starting with making sure that we have greater

deference for municipal decision-making—and I'll speak to that in a moment—making sure that we create more mediation opportunities in our dispute resolution within the OMB; making sure that we create more certainty for our planning documents like official plans, secondary plans, community design plans, exactly what we're doing in this legislation.

Also, at that time I had spoken about anti-SLAPP legislation, which I was quite honoured to bring as part of a private member's bill that was then adopted by the government by then-Attorney General John Gerretsen and Madeleine Meilleur and is law as well. So if I look through my checklist of things that we outlined, it's 10 out of 10 so far, so I feel quite grateful.

I do want to mention a few names of individuals who have been very helpful to me by giving me advice from a community perspective. These are people who I serve in my community. These are people who know these issues quite well—if I can use the term “kitchen cabinet”—a group of advisers who I've had the privilege of bouncing ideas off and getting advice; people like Jay Baltz from Hintonburg, Bob Brocklebank from the Glebe, Don Stewart from Westboro Beach, Sheila Perry, who is part of the federation of community associations, Carolyn Mackenzie from the community of the Glebe. These are regular citizens of the great community of Ottawa Centre, people who really take their responsibility to our community very seriously. They're thoughtful people who give advice all around and have been very helpful to me.

I also want to acknowledge organizations like the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association and people like John Hebert and Pierre Dufresne from Ottawa, who have been very helpful with advice. We may have not agreed 100% on every single point, but I cherish our friendship and I really appreciate their thoughts.

Let me just get into a little bit of detail, after third reading, on the key components, from my perspective, that are very important in this bill and that the Ministry of the Attorney General have significant input in.

The government is proposing a number of reforms through Bill 139 that will help build a stronger planning process for municipalities across Ontario. The changes we are proposing centre around four key pillars: (1) creating greater predictability for residents, communities and developers by sheltering certain major planning decisions from appeal; (2) giving greater deference to the decisions of local communities, while ensuring that development and growth occurs in a way that is good for Ontario and its future; (3) ensuring faster, fairer and more affordable land use planning appeals; and, lastly, (4) providing access to free legal and planning support for Ontarians.

Let me take a little bit of time to just go through those four things, because I think they really capture well what we are accomplishing through Bill 139 that is before you.

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Strong communities take careful planning and careful development. I think we all know that from our respectful communities. It only makes sense that our appeal

process supports those plans by giving communities and developers more predictability.

That's why the proposed measures to transform Ontario's land use planning appeal system include exempting a broad range of major land use planning decisions from appeal, including new official plans, major official plan updates and detailed plans to support growth in major transit areas. These exemptions will help provide greater certainty in the planning system and will go a long way in helping developers and communities prepare to build stronger and more prosperous municipalities.

To help ensure that the voices of local communities in particular are heard, the proposed legislation will require that the tribunal give greater weight to the decisions of local communities. This would be achieved by eliminating lengthy and costly hearings for the majority of planning appeals and by ensuring that some matters could only be appealed on the grounds that they don't conform or are not consistent with provincial and municipal plans and policies.

What this means is that the new tribunal, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, could only overturn a municipal decision if it does not follow provincial and local plans or policies. If the tribunal finds that a municipality's decision does not conform to an official plan, then the matter would be sent back to the municipality for reconsideration, which will help keep planning decisions local.

Taken together, the changes to exempt some planning decisions from the appeal process, coupled with our proposal to give greater weight to decisions made by local communities, I feel, strike the right balance between supporting development while also protecting local interests. It's very clear, especially when it comes to those foundational planning documents like official plans, that there's a lot of work that goes into creating those. There are a lot of requirements under the Planning Act to create those decisions. Once consultations take place, drafting of those plans and reconsideration by municipalities—these are two-to-three-year processes. Those plans, once approved by city council, as the Speaker knows, go to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. His staff, then, has to review those things, make sure they are consistent with the Planning Act, consistent with the provincial policy statement. Further back and forth happens, and they get approved.

After all that, it is important that those decisions are sheltered so that there is predictability and certainty for communities, who have done the hard work in developing these plans, to say, “Now, let's start implementing it.”

Currently, what happens is that most of those plans get appealed to the OMB and you get another kick at the can, another dragging out of the time frame—three or four years before those plans become final. The result is a tremendous amount of acrimony that takes place in the community because you do not have predictability. That's where we get the friction that we see so often between communities, between our residents and de-

velopers. Nobody wants that. I know from speaking to a lot of developers that they don't want that. They want the same predictability and certainty. We really feel that this particular change allows for that.

Speaker, let me now talk about how we're trying to make the appeal process faster, fairer and more affordable as well. If given the choice to go through a lengthy hearing or to have an opportunity to settle some or all of the issues without a hearing at all, I'm sure that most people in Ontario would choose the latter. That's why, under the new tribunal, the government will be requiring parties in major land use planning appeals to participate in a mandatory case management conference prior to a hearing, to identify, define and narrow the scope of the appeal and to discuss opportunities for settlement, including mediation; you may recall I had mentioned that earlier on as one of the things that I thought should be done. It would ultimately avoid the hearing process altogether.

In my opinion—and I'm sure many would agree—this is a far better option because it really allows us to bring parties together and allows us to say, "Okay. What are the issues at stake? What issues can be resolved before even going to a hearing? And hey, is there an opportunity to mediate something?" I would rather take a collaborative process with the opportunity of a win-win solution any day over an adversarial process where the winner takes all. I'm a lawyer and it's hard for me to say this because we like those adjudicative processes, but mediation and case management are always the best way to go.

We are also taking a number of steps to make the appeal process more efficient, for example, by establishing clear timelines for the hearing processes so that people can get a better sense of how long the process is going to take.

Our proposed changes would not only result in more effective hearings but would also support a culture shift to a less adversarial system. For example, we are proposing to get rid of lengthy and often confrontational examinations and cross-examinations of witnesses by parties and their lawyers at most major hearings. Instead, we will clarify the new tribunal's power to effectively guide the hearing by examining parties, witnesses and anyone else who appears before the tribunal. The tribunal would also have the power to ensure hearings are effective and fair by requiring parties to produce evidence or witnesses for examination by the tribunal, where appropriate.

In addition, under the new act, we are proposing to give the government the ability to make regulations that govern the practices and procedures of the tribunal, provide for the use and composition of multi-member panels and prescribe timelines for proceedings before the tribunal under the Planning Act. We're really keen about that, Speaker, because this is where our opportunity is to make sure that we streamline the timelines. One of the concerns I've heard from developers, in particular, is how long the OMB process takes. That's a project on hold for a long period of time, right? These people are

creating opportunities, creating jobs, building housing for people at an affordable price. Let's get these cases resolved in a shorter period of time. This is our opportunity to make sure we've got some really good presumptive timelines as to how long the new tribunal process will take. Speaker, I really strongly feel these are important tools that will go a long way to improving the procedures at the tribunal.

Finally, I would like to talk about how we are helping citizens to access the appeal process through the proposed creation of a new Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. I think all members can attest to how many bake sales that we all have been to by local community associations to help them support OMB appeals—I've got the waistline to show for that. I think we all know that the communities work really hard, because they don't have the resources to fight these appeals. Some feedback I have received is that OMB processes are expensive—lawyers, planners, all kinds of expert witnesses, the time required. People who work in community associations, they are volunteers. They're just like you and me; I think a lot of us had a start in public service by volunteering at these community associations. We ask a lot of them when they are just trying to keep the neighbourhood livable, when they are just trying to make sure that their community is something that they can recognize and they're part of that process. I've heard a lot of feedback as to how we can improve the process and what supports we can provide local communities in the entire land use planning appeal system.

Now, we appreciate that people don't always agree with local land use planning decisions that affect them, but we have also heard the concern that people have, that they don't have access to information about the appeal process and planning or legal advice. That is why we're proposing changes that will empower and support people who want to participate in the appeal process. This will be done by establishing a new independent agency called the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. This centre will help ensure the views of local communities are taken into account when major decisions are made by providing free legal and planning advice to Ontarians throughout the appeal process, including representation in certain cases. The centre will help Ontarians understand and participate more effectively in the appeal process by providing general information about land use planning; offering guidance on the tribunal process and providing legal and planning advice at various stages of the appeal process, which may include representation in some cases.

Land use planning directly impacts Ontarians, so it is critical that they feel supported in the decision-making process. As such, we are also proposing that the tribunal build a new, revamped, user-friendly website so once an appeal process is complete, tribunal decisions would be posted for all to see, and that includes new summaries of decisions that would be explained in plain language. The new website will also make it easier for the public to access information in different formats, such as videos.

Again, the idea is very simple; it is to take our community's perspective, to think from their eyes for a moment and see what kind of supports they need so they remain an active participant in the neighbourhoods that they are building.

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Speaker, I'm quite confident that these proposed changes would be successful in bringing effective change to the appeal process within the land use planning system. These are changes that, to me, continue to help represent the interests of developers while also helping to give residents a real voice when it comes to land use planning decisions. Everybody I have heard from and spoken to on this issue has told me that they don't like the dispute resolution process. Nobody wants to go to court; we go to court when something has broken down in the system. When disputes occur, it's what we need. That should not be the norm; that should always be the exception. I say this as the Attorney General and I say this as a very proud lawyer: That should never be the default. What we need and what Bill 139 is really accomplishing is to make sure that we've got good planning decisions taking place upstream; i.e., at the community and municipal level.

The amazing thing has been that, over the years, our municipalities have really done a good job in refining their planning decision-making process. It's not a time like the 1950s or whatever, when you needed a check at the provincial level. We have sophisticated expertise at a local level. We need to make sure that we respect that. The deference aspect allows us to do this—not to mention that we need to make sure that the communities have a voice as well.

What I have always felt, the message that I always received from my community in the amount of time that I have been working on this issue, is that we need a process that allows for and enables community-inspired development. That is what we're trying to accomplish, because at the end of the day, it's the residents, it's the neighbours who have to live with the development that takes place. They need to make sure that they're part of this. I can tell you that my constituents are not NIMBYs; they appreciate intensification. I represent a downtown community, as the Speaker knows. They appreciate intensification. What they want to see is a plan, a design, something that is contributing to the livability and the sustainability of the community; that mixes and matches with the goals, the inspirations and the aspirations of the community. That, to me, is community-inspired development.

Developers also don't want to fight with the neighbours because they're trying to enhance the neighbourhood. They will be bringing in more neighbours. It only makes sense that we create opportunities in the system where there is less conflict and more opportunity to collaborate. I really strongly believe that Bill 139 accomplishes that. The changes that we made to the Planning Act a few years ago that allowed for more community consultations, making that consultation and feedback part

and parcel of the entire planning decision, coupled with what is offered in Bill 139 by empowering local municipalities and by creating more incentive for them to do their planning updates, to do their secondary plans or community design plans, to do the zoning bylaw updates, really allow for more of that community-inspired development.

I just want to say thank you to my community of Ottawa Centre for giving me the opportunity year after year to work on this very important file. We always knew from the beginning that this was not going to happen overnight, but I'm really proud to stand here to say that it is happening. Your ideas and your thoughts and your suggestions are now part of Bill 139.

I hope that all members will support this important bill so that we can really ensure that we have community-inspired development across the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to acknowledge the comments that were made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the Attorney General.

I come to this debate not only being on the Standing Committee on Social Policy but having previously been a regional councillor for the region of Durham for 13 years. I also had the opportunity to chair the planning and development committee for the town of Whitby for 11 years, and I sat on the conservation board.

One of the aspects where there are still some questions that will need to be addressed—and I know that my colleague the member for Oxford will be speaking more expansively on this—has to do with the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. How will the services be financed, for example? Where will the centres be located? Will there be limits on how many individuals or groups can access the services each year? Who does the support centre report to? My hope will be that, through the postings of the regulations that the Minister of Municipal Affairs referred to in his presentation, we'll get some clarity on that.

We also heard in committee from many of the groups who made delegations, but in particular from municipalities, that parts of the legislation, in their view, still require some clarity, and there's still some un-clarity with regard to the overall impacts on them.

As the Ontario Municipal Board transitions to the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, we hope that these uncertainties will be clarified, so that everyone involved, particularly at the municipal level and the people that they serve, will be able to understand the system and how the transition impacts current and future cases.

As the Attorney General rightly pointed out, the people who are directly impacted are the taxpayers.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to speak specifically to the conserving watersheds part of this bill and give an example from my riding.

I was approached by the Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance in their effort to get a permit from MNRF to conduct research in some of the lakes in my riding. They are trying to find a solution to the invasive Eurasian water milfoil that is spreading in some of our lakes.

They applied for a permit with MNRF. MNRF told them, "Oh, no, it is ocean and fisheries." So we went to ocean and fisheries, who answered back—get this—that "OMNRF has concerns with the proposal and won't be approving this approach. As a result we are closing our file."

There's a little bit of an issue here, because this is not working. So we went back to MNRF and asked, "What exactly do we need to do?" The same type of science exists in southern Ontario, but for some reason, we are not allowed to do the same thing in our lakes when we have invasive species coming in.

I want to read from a motion from the city of Greater Sudbury:

"Whereas Eurasian water milfoil is an introduced, invasive aquatic plant species that can spread rapidly in a lake and cause several negative effects, including the loss of native aquatic plant beds and the loss of recreational opportunities...;

"And whereas" it "occurs in ... 18 lakes in Greater Sudbury"—all in my riding;

"And ... is virtually impossible to eradicate...;

"Therefore be it resolved that the city of Greater Sudbury supports the pilot project to control Eurasian water milfoil proposed by the" Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance.

Yet we can't get a permit.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure to join in, just for a couple of minutes.

I must say, for me, this is sort of the culmination of the involvement in the last couple of years with Bill 139. I remember the number of consultations that I had the opportunity to attend across the province—I didn't do them all, but it was very close, Speaker—and, of course, the debates through the different readings, and then the clause-by-clause.

At the end of the day, you heard from the ministers—and I certainly want to thank them for allowing me the opportunity to work on Bill 139.

This is quite comprehensive. It applies to many things.

I had the opportunity to meet with my local conservation authorities, and I know Kim was there. I have three conservation authorities in my riding. I had the opportunity to speak with my municipal counterparts. As you know, I represent eight municipalities and one upper tier. Frankly, Madam Speaker, we got really good feedback.

We need to get this done. We need to move this forward. I'm hopeful, and I got the impression from the opposition that they want to get this done as well, Madam Speaker. It's a long time coming. Hopefully, after this debate, we can get this off our plate and move on.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to add my two minutes regarding Bill 139. I think what we're seeing here is that there is a very heavy focus on the updating of the Ontario Municipal Board needed. I understand that. But I don't want to ignore the other part of this legislation, which is the conservation authorities. I have the pleasure and honour of having four different conservation authorities in my riding: Nottawasaga Valley, Grand River, Toronto and Region, and CVC, Credit Valley.

I actually have a membership and have had a membership with the CVC for years and years because they have Island Lake Conservation Area. I find it quite funny because—it is very much a place where people go. I happen to have my kayak there. People hike; they fish. It is very well utilized. But whenever I say to people, "You know this is a man-made reservoir, right? Island Lake didn't exist. This was something that we actually did." I find it quite amusing that they don't know that. One of the roles that our conservation authorities have—the most important, I would suggest—is all about water management. It all came about as a result of the famous Hurricane Hazel incident in Mississauga.

I'm pleased that conservation authorities are included in Bill 139. I will caution people that my dealings with constituents who have had to interact with those four—it's the inconsistency in approach. I hope that Bill 139 is going to resolve some of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to wrap up.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Again, it's a pleasure to rise to add a two-minute wrap-up on behalf of the residents of Cambridge and North Dumfries township, who I know have been very interested in this bill.

I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Attorney General, and the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Northumberland–Quinte West and Dufferin–Caledon for their comments on this very important legislation.

As you know, Speaker, there has been tremendous interest from the general public in all aspects of the bill. I'm very proud that this government has listened to the citizens of Ontario to move forward with a more transparent approach with mediating parties with different positions in things like planning disputes and some of the long-term issues that I've heard about from my residents in Cambridge and North Dumfries on the bulky process that we have right now in going to the Ontario Municipal Board for dispute resolution. So this will be a much welcome addition, and they are really looking forward to it.

There has also been much public interest in conservation authorities and looking forward to a modernized framework. I want to now take a moment to thank my own conservation authority, the Grand River Conservation Authority, for the tremendous amount of support that they have given myself, as well as my ministry, over the last few years in providing comments, in weighing in on many of the discussions and for hosting us when we

actually launched the start of the bill. So I want to just thank the Grand River Conservation Authority and all the other conservation authorities that have provided this.

Thank you very much for all your comments, and I really hope that all members support in favour of passing Bill 139.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Steve Bartley, councillor for the municipality of Meaford, and Terry McKay, a former councillor for the municipality of Chatsworth—great community guys. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome Lorris Herenda, the CEO of Yellow Brick House, and my friends Mr. Arya Amirhosseini and Ms. Mana Saranj. Please join me in welcoming them.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I want to introduce, to you and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, a constituent from my riding of Leeds—Grenville who is in the east members' gallery.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to welcome Charlene Catchpole, who is the executive director of the Leeds & Grenville Interval House.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: On behalf of the member from Essex, I want to introduce Thom Rolfe, executive director of Hiatus House in Windsor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We have a number of members of the board of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses here: Charlene Catchpole, chair; Arlene McCalla, vice-chair; Marlene Ham, provincial coordinator; Lorris Herenda; Jane Scheel—and the local Ontario artist who designed the 2017 Wrapped in Courage scarf, Jen Lados.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Liz Brown from Violence Against Women Services Elgin County. With her today is a high school student from St. Joe's, Kyleigh Stubbs, who volunteers and is doing a wonderful job in our community. Welcome.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to my friend Kate Wiggins, executive director of Anova, who is here from London. Welcome.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome my chief, Adam De Caire. He was on paternity leave and he's back on Monday. He's here with my star canvasser, Wyatt De Caire, who turns one on Monday.

Happy birthday in advance, and welcome back.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Jennifer La Chapelle, CEO of Clearview Public Library and president of the Ontario Library Association; Cortney

LeGros, coordinator of outreach, programs and partnerships at the Huntsville Public Library; and Dr. Sabrina Saunders, CEO of the Blue Mountains Public Library, who are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Dave Walpole, a former colleague from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, I would like to welcome May Lui, Sharon Floyd, Kendall Trembath, Star Rogers and Pam Havery to Queen's Park.

I would also like to welcome Robin Haliuk from Talk4Healing.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome some of the amazing team from the Women's Rural Resource Centre in Strathroy here to Queen's Park today.

Thank you for all the work you do. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to also welcome Kate Wiggins from Anova in London, an extraordinary woman who has devoted her entire life to making sure women get the supports they need to get on with their lives.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: In the members' west gallery, I'd like to welcome Jim Burnett and Megan Flynn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to extend a very warm and heartfelt welcome to the executive director of Kingston Interval House, Pam Havery.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, from my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, Bessie Sullivan, who is from the Haliburton County Public Library, and Jesse Carliner from the University of Toronto Libraries. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to welcome Sly Castaldi, who is the executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis—thank you, Sly—and also say a shout-out to Dave Walpole, who was not only formerly at OPSBA; he's also a former superintendent at the Upper Grand District School Board.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to welcome the members of the Ontario Library Association, and in particular my good friend the chief librarian at the University of Ottawa, Leslie Weir.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's my pleasure to introduce the executive director of Interim Place, Sharon Floyd, who is here today from Mississauga and Peel region providing support and advocacy for abused women. We appreciate the tremendous work they do.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I, too, would like to welcome everyone here from OAITH who is here today.

Also a special welcome to Sly, who is on my violence against women round table and its co-chair. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to the House today Brad Harrow. He works for BI-AX in Wingham, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Scarborough–Rouge River on a point of order.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: A point of order: In honour of the late Senator Enverga, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Filipino Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Rouge River is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

WEARING OF SCARVES

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear purple scarves as part of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' campaign marking November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I present this unanimous consent request, a reminder that we are not to wear anything until unanimous consent is granted. It's considered to be a foreign object, for those who need reminding.

The minister seeks unanimous consent to wear purple scarves as part of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' campaign. Do we agree? Agreed.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Point of order: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear buttons to recognize Ontario public library day, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to wear the buttons for Ontario public library day. Do we agree? Carried.

Before we begin, I would like to offer you my observation, and that is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait.

I have had a few complaints from individuals that my warnings are too soon. I think I've made it clear, from almost two weeks ago, that this House will have decorum. I will only give you what you ask.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Ontario seniors are still waiting to see your capacity plan for long-term care. In spite of promises from you

and the Premier, neither one of you can say where or when the promised beds will be built. That's truly a shame. You've wait-listed 32,000 seniors. In just a few years, there will be 50,000 in the queue, a record that may make aging in Ontario a source of national shame.

The question I have for the minister: Is it fair to seniors that, 14 years later, your government still doesn't have a capacity plan for long-term care?

1040

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm very proud to stand up and refer to an announcement that was just made several weeks ago by our Premier to build 5,000 more new long-term-care beds over the next four years and to have an even more substantial target of 30,000 new licences over the next decade, Mr. Speaker. That is on top of the 10,000 beds that we, since forming government in 2003, have built with our partners in the long-term-care system, and 13,500 redeveloped beds as we move on that pathway to 30,000 redeveloped beds by 2025.

This is a substantial new investment. I was very proud to stand up next to the Premier and the Minister of Seniors Affairs to make this announcement a couple of weeks ago. At the same time, we announced certain priority areas based on the capacity plan that we've developed, including indigenous communities as well as other parts of the province where we know the need is greatest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: I would like to tell the House about Judith and Bill. Bill has Alzheimer's and will eventually need long-term care, but currently he is so lucky because his wife, Judith, is caring for him at home and they're enjoying life in Bayfield.

But in rural Ontario, long-term-care beds are often few and far between. Our seniors are sometimes in a position where they must take the first bed available in their region. What this can mean is being an hour or more away, in terms of distance, and that's driving one way. They're away from family and friends. That's just not right.

Speaker, what can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care tell people like Judith and Bill and all seniors in Ontario who rightfully expect to live out their final days close to their family and loved ones?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a small town. My parents, who are 88, still reside there. They face very similar problems to the ones that were just outlined by the member opposite.

We're deeply committed to making sure that individuals across this province, including in rural parts of the province and small towns, have access to that quality of care, whether that be in long-term care or other forms of home care or community supports that allow individuals, particularly our seniors, to reside in their homes or as close to home as possible, where they have those supports: caregiver supports, care partner supports, as well as other loved ones that can support them but also want to be near them, and appropriately so.

So we're making our investments. Those 5,000 new beds that were referenced will not only allow the sustainability of existing homes in some of these small communities and, in many cases, I think, allow them to expand, but it will also allow us to address those parts of the province, including rural parts of the province, that are most in need.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Timely access to home care services is essential for our province's seniors, especially for the 32,000 waiting on long-term-care lists. I recently received a letter describing how an 85-year-old man from Restoule is in limbo, waiting for home care. Despite suffering from Parkinson's, spinal stenosis and cardiac issues, and despite having been recently discharged from hospital with a catheter, and despite having been assessed as needing daily support, he and his family are facing at least a six-week wait before being assigned a personal support worker.

Why is it so hard for this patient to get the care he desperately needs? Why is it that today in Ontario there are not enough PSWs to provide vulnerable citizens with the home care they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This year, as we have for the last three or four years, I believe, we made a substantial new investment in home and community care. I remember two announcements. One was for \$100 million, in-year; another one, recently, in the last weeks, was for an additional \$40 million invested directly into home care. I can't remember precisely what that translates into, but I know that it translates into more PSW hours available for home care clients across the province.

We know that the population is aging. We know that we're seeing increased volumes of individuals who want and deserve to stay at home for as long as possible near their loved ones, so we're making those investments to ensure that those resources are available. We do realize that certain parts of the province and certain demographics do face unique challenges or have greater challenges than other parts of the province, so we're focusing our investments, through our LHINs specifically, to target those areas of greatest need.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. During estimates, I shared with the minister a common occurrence in my riding regarding ALC patients. Every month I receive calls from families desperate to get their loved ones out of ALC in the hospital and into long-term care. Unfortunately, you're looking at a three-year wait. Patients in the South West LHIN are being told that they can be bumped up the long-term-care wait-list by leaving the hospital.

Has our health care system reached such a low point that people would risk serious harm and move home just to be designated a crisis patient in an effort to be bumped

up the waiting list? Can the minister tell the House why patients are being told they can go home to dangerous conditions in order to earn a higher status on long-term-care wait-lists?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're committed to our clients and patients across this province and to providing the highest quality of care. No one in this province would want someone to go to a location other than the highest-quality care with the best possible support. In some cases, that's home care, for those individuals who are prepared and have the necessary supports to be able to go home. For others, it's transitional care, to actually provide them with the specialized resources—if they're complex-care patients, if they're in need of rehabilitation—to give them added ability to live independently and have greater strength, emotional and physical, to be able to return to the community and return to their homes. That's why I'm so proud that we announced, just over a month ago, approximately 600 new transitional beds that will pull people out of ALC, when they no longer need to be there, and provide them with that specialized support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: The shortage of long-term-care beds in my riding is shocking. At Simcoe Manor in Beeton, there are 181 people on the wait-list. At Good Samaritan in Alliston, there are 100 people waiting. At Bay Haven in Collingwood, there are 58 on the list. At the Collingwood Nursing Home, there are 37. At the Stayner Nursing Home there are 49. The list at the Sunset Manor in Collingwood is 196 people. And at Creedan Valley in Creemore, the wait-list is 18.

Is the government going to fix this problem, or is it going to continue to let seniors go without the care they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're investing in 5,000 new long-term-care beds across this province over the next four years. If the member opposite is looking for a solution and looking to see how we're addressing it, we are addressing it by that substantial new investment. In fact, the level of the investment, when you look at our even bigger target of 30,000 new beds over the next decade, is a tremendous, almost unprecedented—I would argue unprecedented—investment in our long-term-care system.

Now, we've been doing capacity planning to establish and then understand with patients and clients and families as well as their advocates and experts—our partners in the long-term-care-home system—to determine precisely where those investments should occur. We've indicated that, for example, it should address the ALC issue, where individuals are in hospital but do not need to be in hospital. It needs to address the unique challenges faced by First Nations and other indigenous communities. It needs to address rural and small towns as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Our senior population is expected to

double by 2031. It is clear that we need to build the health care system capacity now to meet their future needs. This government, however, has ignored the facts and refused to plan for this pending long-term-care crisis. Not only have they pared down home services to the bone, but they've left long-term-care patients with less and less available care hours. Now they plan to redistribute sub-acute hospital beds away from rural and small urban areas. When too many patients are in the hospital because they can't find a long-term-care bed, we know what happens: surgery cancellations and hallway health care.

Will this minister get his priorities straight, stop short-changing rural and small-town urban seniors and remove the current barriers to bolstering long-term-care bed supply?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know why they're being critical of the work that we're doing and solutions we're providing; it's because they have no plan. I'm hopeful that this weekend they're actually going to emerge with a plan on long-term care—with a plan on something.

1050

Let me quote what Candace Chartier, the CEO of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, had to say about our plan: "Today you and your team have made me very proud to be a part of long-term care in Ontario. These so very important investments in this sector will have massive impact on caring for such a fragile population... This is such a monumental moment and I am truly excited to see what the art of the possible is moving forward."

Mr. Speaker, I don't remember seeing or hearing such an enthusiastic endorsement of our health care plans as that one right there. It reflects that we're on the right track, we're making the right investments and we're developing the plan that we need for this province at this time.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development. Not only are college students being forced to choose between dropping out, or cramming five weeks of learning into two, or missing significant amounts of content, and not only are they trying to deal with a financial burden that, in many cases, exceeds the \$500 hardship fund, but their career plans may also be in jeopardy.

We are learning that paralegal students planning to write their entrance exam with the law society won't be finished in time for the February exam sitting because of the extended semester, putting these students behind by at least six months.

Given the fact that this Liberal government sat on the sidelines for five weeks and did nothing to help prevent or resolve the strike, is the minister working on a solution for these paralegal students?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just for context here, that was the party that blocked the end to the strike. Time and

time again, they refused to support legislation that would get students back into the classroom. Now they're concerned about the impact of the strike. If they had been in charge, Speaker, the strike would still be going on.

Colleges are working very, very hard to make sure that students do have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We were doing so well. There are some comments coming from somebody who is even giving the answer, as well as those who have asked. Bring it down.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Colleges are working very hard to make sure that students are able to successfully complete.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's not just students preparing to enter a paralegal career. There are many college programs that require co-op or practice hours for students to enter their profession. Students learning to become electricians could have missed their co-ops. Allied health students and nursing students could have missed their clinical placements.

Does the minister have a plan to work with colleges to ensure that students have the necessary co-op or practice hours and any other requirements they need to write the scheduled certification exams?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really would have loved to have heard those kinds of arguments being made when we were trying to bring students back to college and the NDP were blocking that.

This new concern for students is refreshing, but I do think actions speak louder than words. When they had an opportunity to act to get students back, they actually blocked that.

We've been working very closely with students throughout the strike—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One more stand and we'll go into warnings. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been working with students throughout the strike, and following the strike, to make sure that we can be there to offer as much support as possible to get students back on track.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wish the minister would put as much energy into supporting students as into spinning her responses.

This Liberal government needs to admit its role in this mess—both their decision to sit on the sidelines during the strike, and 14 years of Liberal budgets that left Ontario colleges funded lower on a per student basis than any other Canadian province or territory.

With news today of a 91% strike mandate from contract academic staff at the University of Toronto, who are concerned about the same issues as college faculty, U of T students could soon be suffering, too.

Will this minister finally take responsibility to address the precarious situation of contract college and university faculty and come up with a plan to prevent U of T students from missing classes?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's listen to what college students have actually said. As I said, we've worked closely with students and student groups. The College Student Alliance says, "CSA is ... pleased the student support fund, advocated for by CSA, is an option for students to receive some financial compensation due to the strike.... We are relieved the ministry has ensured funding is there for students who need it most." When it comes to advice, I'm listening to students.

Let's hear what else they have to say. Again from the CSA: "CSA has worked on details for the student hardship fund with the ministry since the fund was announced last week. CSA has also asked for the ministry to allow students who choose to withdraw to have the ability to do so. These students should receive a full tuition refund and no implications on their transcripts."

Students advocated for a hardship fund; we developed it. Students asked for the option of a tuition refund; we provided that option. Students wanted assurances there would be no academic penalty; we would ensure there will be no academic—

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

New question.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development: I want to share what students are telling us about their experience after this five-week strike. Faye, a student at Humber College, said this of the \$500 hardship fund cap: "I think the plan is absolute rubbish. That's barely two weeks' reimbursement of program fees for domestic students." She said, "Mostly, we"—the students—"just feel like we're getting screwed."

Can the minister explain—

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

By way of explanation, you cannot say indirectly what you can't say directly. I'm going to ask you to withdraw. That's not parliamentary language.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Withdraw.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, can the minister explain why her government is offering students such unacceptable options?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can quote again what the College Student Alliance said about the hardship fund. I can't imagine that the member opposite is actually attacking the CSA for their support in the development of this fund.

I can tell you this is the first time in the history of strikes in post-secondary education that this kind of fund has been established. It was established with students and for students.

I just want to go back. Remember, if the NDP had their way—they said they would not have ordered them back to work. They would still be on strike. Those costs would still be adding up. Time and time again, the NDP blocked the legislation that would have gotten students into the classroom even more quickly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As the minister knows, there is already a severe lack of campus mental health supports, and the stress of this strike, the stress of being forced to either drop out or cram five weeks of coursework into two, is too much for some students.

One of the students who contacted us said, "I'm scared about how it is going to be at college this week. I'm scared about seeing mental breakdowns in the hallway, people being angry ... and negative energy surrounding the school. I'm scared about everyone's mental health and overall well-being."

Speaker, students should not feel scared to be back at school because of the stress that they have experienced. Will this minister actually listen to what students are saying and direct the colleges to provide additional emergency mental health supports on Ontario college campuses?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, once again, it's astonishing, this new-found concern for students and the impact of the strike. That is exactly why we took action to get students back to class.

This has been very, very difficult for students, for faculty members, for employers in the community who were looking forward to having those students working in their organizations. The strike was tough. It had a big impact. We're doing everything we can to support students to get back into the classroom and back on track for their careers.

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

1100

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Clearly, this Liberal government's plan to get students back to class seamlessly is not working. As the minister knows, students are anxious about the stress of managing a compressed semester and the—

Mr. Han Dong: It's better than your plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're in warnings. The member from Trinity-Spadina is warned.

Carry on.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Students are anxious about the stress of managing a compressed semester and the lack of any other good options.

Samantha, a student at Fleming College, said this: "Yesterday I had classmates crying, and general anxiety and uncertainty. A lot of us are thinking of dropping out. Everyone I have spoken to feels like there is no good option here. I don't think anyone knows how to handle it. Teachers are trying."

Speaker, will this minister direct colleges to offer students the supports they need so that they can feel confident in their ability to finish the semester?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is exactly what colleges across this province are doing. They are well aware of the difficulty that students are facing as a result of this strike. They are doing everything in their power—with increased funding from the province for mental health services on campus. They are really focused on the success of the students.

I would just suggest that the member opposite stop feeding the narrative that students should quit. Students should not quit. They should be focused on getting back. They should be supported in getting back, and for the member opposite to keep talking about why they should quit is very disheartening for me.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The residents of Perth–Wellington are paying the price for this government's failure in long-term care. Many seniors are in long-term-care beds far from home because of long waiting lists. Families, sometimes even spouses, are being separated. Many more are stuck in hospital beds because they can't get the long-term-care bed they need. It's no wonder that people are rallying against the proposed transfer of up to 50 beds from Hillside Manor to London.

We can't afford to lose any beds. Does the minister agree, and will the government support my motion to keep these beds in Perth–Wellington?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member knows I've been working very hard on the issue with regard to Hillside Manor, and I share his concerns. As I referenced earlier, I grew up in a small town. My parents, who are in their late 80s, still reside in that town. I understand just how critically important it is that we have all sorts of health care options available, including long-term-care beds as close to home, as close to their current residences as possible, partly because of the transportation challenges that exist and partly because it's important that their family, loved ones, caregivers and care partners are able to maintain that close relationship and visit them on a regular basis.

I've been very engaged with the issue of Hillside Manor. We've had, I believe, two public consultations thus far. The member knows as well that there will be no change to the situation at Hillside without my explicit written approval. We are far away from anything in that direction. I'm working to find an option that the community will support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The demand for long-term-care beds is beyond crisis levels in my riding. This past March, I told the minister that the wait-list for long-term-

care beds in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock was 1,800. That number is now 2,700. That's an increase of 900 people in seven months.

These are real people, mothers and fathers, on wait-lists in a LHIN that already had the highest ratio of need to available beds in the entire province.

The government's soulless approach to this issue is completely inexcusable. The minister throws around hollow numbers that mean nothing to real people who are waiting—in many cases dying—on lists.

When will the minister finally get to work and actually start building new long-term-care beds in the areas that need them?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think I understand what's going on here. This is the eve of their policy meeting, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what we know about the Progressive Conservative Party: We know when they were in power, they closed 10,000 hospital beds. We know they closed more than two dozen hospitals. We know they referred to nurses as hula hoops—outdated and unnecessary. We saw droves of nurses being let go, laid off and fired.

I know they're trying to divert a little bit of attention away from the fact that they have absolutely no plan when it comes to health care, when it comes to long-term care or when it comes to home care. I'm looking forward to this weekend and hoping perhaps beyond hope that they will emerge from this weekend with a realistic plan on long-term care that we'll finally be able to hear about.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Two years ago, the Premier promised that a privatized Hydro One would lower rates. Instead, Hydro One is seeking large rate increases in order to pay for its empire-building ambitions, including its \$6.7-billion purchase of Avista. Not only that, Hydro One now wants Ontario families to pay millions to replace its overpriced smart meters with new prepayment meters. Those meters will allow Hydro One to bypass winter disconnection rules. Will the Premier stop Hydro One from opening up this new loophole and stop the installation of prepayment meters?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Protecting Ontario's energy consumers and ensuring greater fairness across the energy system are top priorities for our government.

In its unapproved rate application on page 2,003, in two paragraphs, Hydro One is exploring this technology as an effort to ensure more customer choice. Hydro One has informed me that no customer would be put on any type of payment plan without their consent. Let me repeat that: Customers will have to opt in to be part of this program. Additionally, no residential customer will be without power during the winter months, regardless of any type of meter they may choose to have in the future. This initiative is just one of the options Hydro One is examining to offer their customers more choice on how

they manage their electricity costs. On that side is fear-mongering; on this side is choice for Ontario ratepayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know that many people in difficult situations can be forced to take a choice they might not otherwise take.

Again to the Acting Premier: A few years ago, the Auditor General noted that Hydro One's smart meters cost hundreds of millions more than the smart meters of any other utility in this province. Now, having forced its customers to overpay for its botched rollout of smart meters, the privatized Hydro One wants its customers to pay yet again for new prepayment meters. Prepayment water meters caused serious harm to families in the UK during the Thatcher era, and frankly, we can expect that they will cause serious harm here as well.

Will the Premier do the same thing as the British government eventually did, and that is, stop the privatized Hydro One from installing prepayment meters in Ontario?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Obviously, the opposition member didn't hear what I said in the first answer, so let me reiterate this: Customers will have to opt in to be part of this program. This is a choice that Hydro One is looking at to make sure that ratepayers have a choice—something like we are offering when it comes to residential price plans.

When you're looking at what we have done as a government to protect consumers—we updated the Energy Consumer Protection Act in 2015 to ensure that we're banning door-to-door sales for energy contracts, we increased consumer representation in Ontario proceedings, and we enhanced the authority of the OEB to further protect electricity ratepayers by boosting consumer protection.

We've done all this while we've lowered rates by 25%. Meanwhile, the third party continues to have no credible plan. We've got a plan to protect ratepayers and make their rates—

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Our government is committed to building a province where everyone can live free from the fear of threat of violence and harassment. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, one of our terrific violence-against-women partner organizations, is here today at Queen's Park. OAITH is a coalition of first-stage emergency shelters, second-stage housing, and community-based organizations who work toward ending violence against women. They are the largest women's shelter association in Canada and represent approximately 50% of violence-against-women shelters in Ontario.

1110

One of their member agencies, Kingston Interval House, has been supporting women and their children in my riding for over 40 years. I'm thrilled that their execu-

tive director, Pam Havery, who is the eastern region representative on the board of directors of OAITH, is here with us.

Can the minister please tell the House about the great work OAITH is doing across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for the question and for her advocacy in supporting survivors of domestic violence.

I'd also like to thank OAITH for being here with us today, and for all of the support they provide violence-against-women shelters in the province.

I'd also like to thank all of the violence-against-women staff and volunteers across the province for the work they do each and every day to support the women and their children who have experienced domestic violence.

This November, OAITH launched their fifth annual purple scarf *Wrapped in Courage* campaign. This year's scarf was designed by local Ontario mixed-media artist Jen Lados, who is here today. The beautiful design on the scarf reads, "The courage of a woman alone is not enough." Her artistic vision has produced a scarf that I know many people across Ontario will be proud to wear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for her answer.

We recognize the unfortunate reality that violence against women continues to be prevalent in our society. Last year, nearly 11,000 women and over 6,700 children were served by our 96 emergency shelter agencies across the province. Over 45,000 women and children received counselling services.

This government is committed to improving the lives of women and their children, and strengthening communities, by helping organizations such as OAITH end domestic violence and support survivors.

We have heard from violence-against-women agencies that there is a need to increase the training for front-line workers, and that there has been an increase in the number of older women who are accessing supports. When we speak of front-line workers, I want to acknowledge them, each and every one, and especially those on the front line, taking those first calls.

Can the minister please outline how we continue to support organizations like OAITH and the violence-against-women sector as a whole?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today I'm pleased to announce that OAITH will be receiving over \$1 million over four years as part of this government's seniors strategy. This funding will ensure that seniors-specific front-line worker training is provided across the sector. OAITH will also be receiving \$130,000 from my ministry to deliver additional training on a variety of topics to front-line staff across the province.

In addition, my ministry, along with the Ministry of the Status of Women, is moving ahead on an updated Domestic Violence Action Plan and the creation of a gender-based violence strategy.

We will continue to work across government and with community partners to make this province safer for all women and their children.

I encourage all members to join me following question period for a photo on the staircase wearing our purple scarves, as well as for OAITH's lunch reception in room 230.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We have critical long-term-care issues in my riding of Nipissing. This has created bed pressures at the North Bay Regional Health Centre, which is being used for long-term-care beds.

This government announced reconstruction of our territorial district home, Cassellholme, seven years ago. For seven years, North Bay has been waiting to see a real shovel in the ground.

Cassellholme appeared before the committee last week, asking for needed amendments to Bill 160. These critical amendments will allow for long-term-home financing to be borne by Cassellholme, as opposed to relying on the city to borrow.

My question is: Will this government support my amendments to finally get Cassellholme's project moving?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This is obviously an important issue. I'm a bit surprised, because the member and I are working on the issue of long-term-care homes in his riding. He hasn't brought this specific issue to my attention.

Be that as it may, I have routinely and uniformly said to all of my colleagues in this House that if there are any local or provincial issues, I'm happy to sit down with them and talk through them and see if there's something that we can do to address them. I'm happy to do this as well.

I do want to emphasize that the 5,000 additional long-term-care beds we're providing over the next four years, including and specifically in high-needs areas, in rural, small town and northern parts of this province, will help us to make, with our partners, the necessary investments to provide additional long-term-care homes to an aging population.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—here is a dose of reality for the minister: In Leeds–Grenville, 588 people are waiting for a long-term-care bed, but only 35 beds open each month. That means families have to expect a wait of 574 days. It's disgraceful and shows the system is in crisis.

My constituents with aging loved ones don't want empty promises. They want action to protect the beds we have and construction of new beds, they want assurances that growing complaints about quality of care will be addressed, and they want to know when overworked staff caring for our loved ones will finally get some resources.

The government has had years to fix this; they've only made it worse. When are they going to do something?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, what we're not going to do is what they did when they were in power. In

Timiskaming, home care hours were reduced by 20%. In Pembroke, they cut service for 50% of their 3,000 clients. In Algoma, 25% of clients lost service. In North Bay, 20% of all home care visits were eliminated. Even at the time—

Interjections.

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

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Frank Klees said at the time, "I can tell you that I'm hearing from my constituents that they are not being well looked after in the area of home care." This was when the PCs were in power.

Tory MPP for Sarnia Marcel Beaubien said that the government was reducing service levels to patients, going on to say, "I find this unacceptable.... I don't care how we do it. We must make sure our sick and elderly get the type of care they need" where and "when they need it." That is what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

They have a policy conference this weekend. I hope that they're going to address this issue in a practical and tactical way.

Interjections.

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. For nearly five years the city of Toronto has asked the provincial government to help fund its \$2.6-billion capital repair program for social housing. The Premier has repeatedly refused.

Yesterday, the federal government announced funding for social housing repairs, but only if matched by the province. Will the Premier finally agree to fund the costs of social housing repairs in partnership with municipal and federal governments, as the NDP has always proposed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Housing.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for the question.

Yesterday was National Housing Day, and what a historic day it was. I joined the Prime Minister and Mayor Tory to hear the announcement of the National Housing Strategy, a strategy that Ontario has been working hard on, a strategy where we fought to ensure that the end-of-agreement funding for our existing stock of social housing would be protected—and it has been. This means our existing stock of social housing will continue to be affordable and stable, that there will be money to reinvest in repairs of it. Earlier this year, we announced \$657 million of funding to help repair our existing stock of social housing.

Mr. Speaker, we're on top of the housing file and we welcome having a federal partner that's finally at the table.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, back to the Acting Premier: Hundreds of families are on the verge of losing their homes. Hundreds more will not get those homes on a wait-list of 170,000 families in Ontario. They wait an average of four years. Words won't house them; only housing will house them—and money.

1120

The minister is right. Yesterday, the federal government offered money to help save those homes, but only if this money is matched by the provincial government. The NDP has committed to this. The Premier has repeatedly refused.

Now that the federal government has come to the table with money for social housing, will the Premier finally match this funding: Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Ontario has been spending over \$1 billion a year on our social housing. We have been spending more than the federal government on social housing. That is why we are so excited that we now have a federal government that is a full partner with us and with communities to build up the social housing that we need. We need to build more and preserve what we have.

Mr. Speaker, we invested \$200 million in our Home for Good strategy to provide supportive and transitional housing in communities across this province for vulnerable groups. We have a goal to end chronic homelessness by 2025. The federal housing strategy is now aligning with our long-term—

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

LOGEMENTS À PRIX ABORDABLES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est également pour le ministre du Logement et responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté. Hier, on a entendu, évidemment, la grande stratégie nationale pour le logement.

Speaker, the Ontario Fair Housing Plan promotes affordable housing and helps hundreds of Ontarians to have access to housing. This is a crucial issue in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier, where we really want to know how to get good, affordable, suitable housing for people. The question of homelessness is top of mind in the riding. We know that sustainable, inclusive communities can only be built if people have a home.

Lorsque les gens ont un logement adéquat, un logement qui répond à leurs besoins, ils sont mieux capables de répondre et de participer dans leur communauté.

I'd like to have more details, if I could, from the minister about how the National Housing Strategy will

help make sure that everyone in Ontario has an affordable and suitable place to call home.

L'hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Je veux remercier la députée pour Ottawa–Vanier pour sa question et pour son appui pour le logement abordable.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to join Prime Minister Trudeau and Mayor Tory yesterday at the historic National Housing Strategy announcement at the Lawrence Heights community here in Toronto, one of Toronto Community Housing's largest revitalization projects, a project which will now be able to be accelerated as a result of these types of investments.

As minister, my number one goal is to make sure that every Ontarian has safe, secure and affordable housing. That's why we released our Fair Housing Plan earlier this year, a 16-point plan that comprehensively addresses issues around the affordable homes strategy and also commits to ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

The National Housing Strategy announcement guarantees us funding to move forward, and Ontario will not leave any federal money on the table. We will be working with our federal counterparts very carefully over the coming weeks and months to work out the details of this to make sure that we can achieve the goals we want for Ontario housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Again to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy: It's fabulous to have a minister that continues to lead the government's effort on housing needs.

Families in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier have already seen the benefits of the efforts that we've put into housing: over 1,600 affordable housing units have been created; over 9,000 affordable units have been repaired; 134 households have received down payment assistance, which is so important; and over 2,600 people have been prevented from being evicted.

First of all, Speaker, I want to thank the minister for continuing the efforts of Ontario, and all his staff who are doing such a fabulous job. Ontario is working hard to get housing right and make sure that people have access to housing.

Can the minister update the House on the work that he and his ministry are doing?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: The National Housing Strategy is great news for Ontarians, and it builds on the work that we're doing here in our province.

Starting on January 1 of this year, we doubled the rebates for first-time homebuyers through the provincial portion of the land transfer tax to make housing more affordable for first-timers.

We announced the Fair Housing Plan, a 16-point comprehensive strategy that's making housing more affordable for Ontarians, whether they want to rent a home or buy a home.

We expanded rent control to all Ontario tenants, bringing more stability and protection to them.

We announced \$657 million in social housing repairs earlier this year, to ensure that our existing stock of affordable housing is brought up to a better state of repair.

We will commit to ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

We invested \$200 million into the Home for Good program to ensure that we build more housing for vulnerable communities, to help homeless people find a suitable home with supports.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Hastings and Prince Edward counties have one of the oldest populations in Ontario, and they have long wait-lists as well for long-term-care facilities.

At Centennial Manor in Bancroft, the wait time for a bed is 1,049 days. That's almost three years, Speaker. At Hastings Manor in Belleville, there are 300 people on the wait-list.

Thousands of seniors in my riding are waiting for space in a long-term-care home. Many of them are being sent home from hospital to a very unsafe environment. We've heard horror stories about the lack of home care in our communities for these seniors. They're being left in very dangerous situations at times. There has been no money for new beds in the last many Liberal budgets.

The minister has had 14 years to address this problem. Why has he not addressed it until now?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Let me address a couple of things. When I was having the engagement with the member from Nipissing—and he knows this, Mr. Speaker. He knows that we're bringing forward, on the government's side, the amendment that he has requested and that he referred to earlier, so I'm not quite sure why he brought it up in the Legislature.

The stakeholders that he has referenced are supportive of the wording that the government is bringing forward. It's actually more accurately prescribed in the government amendments.

He knows that we are making these changes. He has been told. I'm not quite sure why he asked here.

I forgot to add the context, when I was talking about those massive cuts to home and community care by the PCs. It was because, in 2001-02, the cuts were so disastrous that the CCACs at the time were left with a \$175-million shortfall, due to the PC cuts—cuts supported by the current leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, who was the Progressive Conservative Youth Federation president at the time—

Interjections.

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

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Completely ignoring the Speaker when he's standing is not very parliamentary.

Supplementary? The member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. According to data from the Ontario Ministry of Finance, the number of seniors is expected to more than double by 2036.

The Central East Local Health Integration Network, which is the second largest in Ontario and includes the region of Durham and my riding, is facing increasing demands on its long-term-care system. This local health integration network has the highest number of patients waiting for long-term-care placement, and the highest time to placement, in days, in Ontario. Clearly, the Liberal government's previous commitments aren't meeting the long-term-care needs in the region of Durham.

Would the Liberal government commit today to provide the long-term-care resources to address the long-term-care crisis in the region of Durham?

1130

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, 5,000 new beds over four years and 30,000 over the next decade is the commitment that this government made.

But this is all useful context: the cuts that they made to home care when they were in government, the 10,000 acute-care beds that they closed, the nurses that they fired and the hospitals that they closed.

I'm expecting, with this weekend's PC conference in perpetual cuts, that they're going to emerge this weekend with yet another plan to devastate our health care system. The public remembers—it wasn't that long ago—the measures taken by that party when they were in power, supported by many, if not most, of the members opposite still today. Those cuts were devastating to a health care system that took years to rebuild, but rebuild it we have.

We're making those critically important investments, including in long-term care, that will continue to provide that highest-quality care.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim. Every worker in Ontario should be safe at work. But just last week, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions released a shocking poll. It showed that violence against health care workers is getting worse, not better. Two out of three front-line health care workers report being physically assaulted last year, 83% were verbally abused, and nearly half of all of our health care workers were sexually harassed or assaulted. This is not acceptable. Why is this government ignoring the violence inside our hospitals and doing nothing to protect our front-line health care workers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that very, very important question. Yes, nurses play a huge, integral role in the provision of the services that we receive in health care. We know what we've seen over the years is an increase in violence in those settings. We fully accept that and know that we need to do something about that.

The way we've approached it to make sure that every worker in Ontario is in a healthy and safe workplace is to bring forward our Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table. It's a phased approach. The group has spent about the last year talking about the provision and the improvement of violence prevention in our health care sector, in the hospital sector. They came to a consensus, Speaker. There was organized labour at the table, management from the hospitals, health care professionals and my own staff.

I can follow up in the supplementary as to the progress this group is making.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Acting Premier: This is an ongoing issue. I wrote to the Premier in July 2015 asking the government to take action to protect workers in our health care system. Two and a half years later, we see this Premier continue to let them down and continue to ignore the violence that they face inside of our hospitals.

Two out of three health care workers would not have been physically assaulted each and every year if proper staffing levels were in place, but the Premier has squeezed our hospital funding and is making the problem worse.

When will the government stop making excuses and start taking action to ensure that every health care worker goes home safe to his or her family at the end of every shift?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I appreciate the question, but I would argue with the assertion that we have let these folks down. We've done exactly the opposite. What we've done is, we've sat down with the people who are most affected—with the people from organized labour and from the management of the hospital—and we've worked through a plan. We've talked to people who are on the front lines, who see this on a daily basis and who know what needs to change in order for these places to become the safe places that we want them to.

We're working on the advice. We're sending MOL into each and every hospital in the province of Ontario. We're moving it into other arenas of health care: into long-term-care homes, into doctors' offices—anywhere those valuable health care professionals are working. They deserve nothing but the best when it comes to health and safety in this province. We're determined that by working with the groups affected and by moving ahead on the leadership table, we're all going to fix this together.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As the MPP for Etobicoke North, of course I appreciate the many historic investments our government is making in Toronto transit projects. That includes over \$12 billion for projects that have been

completed, are under construction or will soon be under way.

I'd like to personally thank Minister Del Duca for being in my riding almost every few weeks to make yet another welcome announcement. This includes, for example, the \$2-billion Finch West LRT, which will serve my community and has eight stops right within my own riding.

We've seen significant progress to date on these investments, and there's more work to be done, but this will help commuters across my riding and beyond. Est-ce que le ministre peut élaborer sur leur travail et sur les mesures que notre gouvernement prend, especially the time frame?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Etobicoke North not only for his question today, but for the fact that he's been a champion for the last 14 years for the good people of Etobicoke North—very supportive of all of our transit initiatives from the Finch West LRT, to the Spadina subway extension, to GO regional express rail and so much more.

Last Friday, I was absolutely delighted to join with representatives from all three levels of government to mark a very exciting milestone. In now less than 30 days—I think it's about 24 days from today—the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension will open to service for the public here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Now, I said on Friday at the announcement we made that I cannot personally wait until the morning of Sunday, December 17 to hop on that first train that's going to leave York region, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Station, and go all the way down to Union Station with my two young daughters who are 10 and six. I want them to see, thanks to our Premier and our government's investments, what their transit future looks like.

I'll talk more about this in the follow-up question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you to the minister. This is actually very important and a certified big deal. I, too, am looking forward to December 17.

The TYSSE is just one part of our plan to build an integrated transit network. Now more than ever, consumers have unique needs, and they need a transit system that can deal with them wherever they want to go, whether it's parents picking up their kids or students attending post-secondary classes. Residents in my own community of Etobicoke North are expecting our government to respond with a transit network that speaks to such needs.

Would the minister please provide the members of this House with information on how the new line 1 subway extension will fully connect our region, including my community of Etobicoke North?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Etobicoke North for his follow-up. He's 100% right: This is a certified big deal.

The TYSSE will play an absolutely critical role in helping people to get to work or to school and back home again faster than they do now. This is because the

subway extension will also connect various regional and local transit systems together.

For example, in York region, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Correct me if I'm wrong, but we're in warnings, and there are people who have been warned? I see.

Carry on.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was saying, Speaker, in York region, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and Highway 407 Stations will serve as hubs for Viva and York Region Transit. The Downsview Park Station will connect GO passengers on the Barrie line to the subway, to the TTC, meaning that you won't have to go all the way down to Union Station to transfer.

Fundamentally, the opening of this Spadina subway extension demonstrates once and for all that we're the government that builds subways and they were the government that killed and filled them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

I recently visited Yee Hong community wellness centre in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. I understand from my visit that this government had not increased the long-term beds for the last 12 years. When I was at the Mon Sheong long-term-care fundraiser earlier this month, I was told that their waiting list is seven years long. Some of the seniors on the waiting list actually died while waiting.

My question to the minister is, why the sudden announcement for new beds? Is there an election in the air?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to finally hear from the member opposite from Scarborough—

Interjections: Rouge River.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —Rouge River—thank you—on this issue, because I can tell you that all of the Liberal members who represent Scarborough and the Scarborough region have been relentless in working with me in a collaborative way to continue to provide important health care access to the people of Scarborough.

1140

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope the thousands of viewers today can hear the enthusiasm coming from this side of the Legislature when it comes to Scarborough and Scarborough health care.

We're absolutely committed. We've given them a planning grant for Durham to plan for the future of health care in that important region of the province. We're making capital investments across the board at the hospitals and the communities. We recently opened many, many things.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: I have visited every long-term-care facility in Sault Ste. Marie, and the waiting lists are upwards of four years long. Approximately 1,000 seniors are waiting for beds in our city.

With an aging population, the reality is that the demand for these beds will only increase in the years and, in fact, the months to come.

Many seniors are required to sign 90-day contracts to be moved into transitional beds on the promise that they will receive the long-term-care they need in the imminent future. All too often, they are asked to re-sign these 90-day contracts over and over and over again. Sadly, some of our seniors never survive to see an end to that cycle. Imagine your loved one being forced to sign these 90-day contracts over and over again, only to die before they get to the home they were promised.

My question is: What will you do, Minister, to ensure that the seniors in Sault Ste. Marie get the homes they need now?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have no idea what's going to come out of this weekend's policy conference by the PCs, because the PCs have no plan. Their leader has no plan, so we can only go by what their leader has done in the past. We know that in 2013 he was a member of the federal Conservative government that closed down the Health Council of Canada. In 2012, the leader of the official opposition's federal government closed the National Aboriginal Health Organization.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't care what time it is. You're still not going to get carried away.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We all remember when he voted for a budget that axed the Interim Federal Health Program, cutting off health care to thousands of refugees, and, of course, most notably, voted to reopen the abortion debate.

Interjections.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: They're a bunch of Luddites.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: "Luddites"? Withdraw that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is going to be named if he does not withdraw.

Hon. David Zimmer: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I make that choice. The tone is going to change.

We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 174—sorry.

Point of order. The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to split Bill 177. I tabled that motion yesterday.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Speaker. Forgive me for being late on these introductions, but they're important. We have members of the Ontario Public Library Association and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries with us today, including, I'm proud to say, the CEO of the Burlington Public Library, Maureen Barry—the best library in Ontario, Speaker.

Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Des Rosiers, Nathalie
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad

MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill

Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

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

DEFERRED VOTES

CANNABIS, SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AND ROAD SAFETY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CANNABIS,
L'ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
ET LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

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

Bill 174, An Act to enact the Cannabis Act, 2017, the Ontario Cannabis Retail Corporation Act, 2017 and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, to repeal two Acts and to make amendments to the Highway Traffic Act respecting alcohol, drugs and other matters / Projet de loi 174, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le cannabis, la Loi de 2017 sur la Société ontarienne de vente du cannabis et la Loi de 2017 favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, abrogeant deux lois et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne l'alcool, les drogues et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 2, 2017, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 174, An Act to enact the Cannabis Act, 2017, the Ontario Cannabis Retail Corporation Act, 2017 and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, to repeal two Acts and to make amendments to the Highway Traffic Act respecting alcohol, drugs and other matters.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gélinas, France
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff

McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Souza, Charles

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Jones, Sylvia
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pettapiece, Randy

Romano, Ross
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 59; the nays are 26.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 22, 2017, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

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

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my privilege to welcome a group, Philippine Advancement through Arts and Culture, here today: Paulina Corpuz, Ricky Esguerra, Jason Reyes, Anna Marie Palalon and Ali Chatur. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Glad you're with us.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I rise in this House today to urge the Minister of Transportation to respond appropriately to the expressed will of this House. On September 28, the Ontario Legislature unanimously passed our resolution calling upon the minister to partner with the town of Halton Hills to develop a long-term transportation strategy for the town, including a review of the need for a Highway 7 Acton bypass, taking into account the need for improved safety, efficiency and economic development opportunities.

During the debate on our resolution, I was very encouraged by the remarks of the Minister of Transportation's parliamentary assistant, the member for Kitchener

Centre. She said, and I quote from Hansard, “I can assure the member, and every other member of this House, that the ministry is going to continue to actively participate in this study ... we’re going to need to see if there’s anything else that we can do at the provincial level to improve both the safety and the efficiency of this stretch of Highway 7.”

I’ve recently heard from the town of Halton Hills, telling me that they are still experiencing difficulties with the Ministry of Transportation and that the ministry continues to raise challenges to the proposed new business development at the 340 Main Street North Acton property. We are concerned that this may call into question the whole project. The minister needs to intervene. We are offering to partner with the minister, and we need him to be a funding partner.

I have followed up with the Minister of Transportation, who I acknowledge has responded to some of my requests on behalf of our riding. Since the passage of our resolution, I have written to him and spoken to him several times about our proposed partnership.

Today, I urge him to respect the expressed will of this House and partner with us.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can tell me that. If they don’t stand, then statements are over.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Yvan Baker: This week is Holodomor Awareness Week. I stand to pay tribute to the victims of the Holodomor.

This week, we pay tribute to the anniversary of the famine genocide of 1932-33, known as the Holodomor. This was when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine’s borders and confiscated all grain to destroy a Ukrainian population that was opposed to his rule—a population that sought the same freedom and the same independence that the people of Ukraine are fighting for at this very moment, this very day.

Seventeen people per minute, 1,000 per hour and 25,000 per day were dying of famine at the height of the Holodomor. The world was silent, and millions died as a result.

My grandmother was a survivor of the Holodomor. She lost three of her brothers to the Soviet regime. She once told me that she hoped the victims of the Holodomor would not only be remembered but honoured. “Honoured,” she said, meant not just remembering them or commemorating them but taking steps to make sure that a crime like this one never happens again.

That is why I’m so proud, Speaker, to stand here today on behalf of our government and on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian community, who worked so hard and have succeeded in ensuring that the Holodomor is now on the Ontario curriculum so that every young person can learn about the Holodomor. This government funded or helped to fund the Holodomor Mobile Classroom, which travels the province teaching children about the Holodomor.

Today, Speaker, I hope we take this opportunity to remember and commemorate the victims but also renew our efforts to ensure that a crime like this one never happens again.

Let us do what my grandmother would have asked if she were here today. Let us remember the victims, let us commemorate the victims and let us honour them.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise to speak about the Love Shouldn’t Hurt campaign. Sadly in Ontario, a woman is killed every six days by her partner. In Durham region, one in three people will experience abuse in their lifetime.

I recently had the honour to participate in the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council of Durham’s launch of the Love Shouldn’t Hurt campaign at the YWCA’s Adelaide House in Oshawa.

The Violence Prevention Coordinating Council of Durham represents over 30 organizations who work collaboratively to create a safe community for families and individuals who have been impacted by violence and abuse in any form, including domestic violence, sexual assault and child or elder abuse.

This year alone, Durham communities have mourned the loss of three women whose lives were violently taken by their partners, which changed the lives of their children and families forever.

Through the Love Shouldn’t Hurt campaign, together we will educate businesses, organizations and individuals about eliminating violence against women, how men in particular can be part of the solution, healthy versus unhealthy relationships, and the impact on families and communities. Together we are saving lives, changing lives. Love shouldn’t hurt, Speaker.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Tomorrow, I will for the third time join 12 dedicated, compassionate and good-hearted women working for the Sudbury Counselling Centre. These women have been on the picket line for six long weeks in freezing rain, wind, snow, sleet and below-zero temperatures. These striking women offer psychotherapy and counselling services to the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt but also to clients from farther away, like in Manitoulin Island or Sturgeon Falls. Many of their services, especially the francophone services, are not available anywhere else in our region.

This dispute is not about wages. These workers have had a collective agreement in place for over 30 years. They are loyal staff members with no history of problems with the collective agreement, but for the last six weeks, the people of Sudbury are without the counselling and the programs that they need when going through some very difficult circumstances, such as sexual assault, domestic violence or mental illness. Some of the counselling is court-mandated, which means that right now some of

their clients are heading back to jail, because the counselors are on strike.

These women are professional mediators and counselors. Their profession is all about finding common ground, so I can't understand how they are still on strike. I urge the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Attorney General, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Labour to help bring an end to this way too long and way too cold labour dispute.

LEBANESE HERITAGE

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I was pleased earlier today to join you and many of my colleagues and members of the Lebanese community to raise the Lebanese flag in recognition of Lebanese Independence Day, which is November 22, 1943, so this is the 74th anniversary.

Also, on Monday, I was able to attend Lebanon day at Ottawa Welcomes the World, which is a celebration that we have been having for many different countries across the world in Ottawa. It was a wonderful celebration, there was great food and there was an opportunity to celebrate the rich cultural history that Lebanon has.

It was also an opportunity for the community to thank Ambassador Sami Haddad, his wife, Nadia, and his children, Joseph, Peter, Jad and Michael, for their contributions during their posting in Ottawa. I also would like to personally thank Ambassador Haddad for his hospitality and genuine graciousness and openness in all of the dealings that I've had with him.

Last year, I introduced Bill 60, An Act to proclaim the month of November Lebanese Heritage Month, to recognize the vibrant Lebanese community in Ottawa, Ontario and Canada and their contributions in science, education, medicine, law, politics, business and sports to our great country.

I was encouraged by the words of my colleagues and the unanimous support that the bill received in the Legislature, and I look forward to continuing to work with all of my colleagues to get Bill 60 passed and proclaim November as Lebanese Heritage Month here in Ontario.

LOCAL BUSINESS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As I've mentioned many times in the Legislature, my riding has been hard hit by layoffs and plant closures, but Oxford is still home to many great manufacturers, businesses, farms, restaurants and retailers—something I have promoted as part of my Shop Local, Buy Local campaign.

While visiting local businesses, it's been great to see the variety of products and services available so close to home and the passion those business owners have for their work and their communities.

As people begin their Christmas shopping, I encourage them—everyone—to give their community a gift by shopping local. Shopping local in Oxford is encouraged

by many local organizations, including the BIAs and chamber of commerce as well as Tourism Oxford, who produced an Oxford Fresh map highlighting local agri-food industries and tourist destinations.

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The province also has a role to play in keeping local business thriving, which is why I've been visiting local businesses around my riding to hear their concerns and to better understand the challenges they face as a result of the increasing costs of doing business in Ontario, like the high cost of hydro.

In my riding, a number of municipalities have passed resolutions supporting my Shop Local, Buy Local campaign and encouraging the provincial government to support small, local businesses and make it easier for businesses to operate in Ontario.

With the holiday season approaching, I encourage everyone to look locally for gifts, produce, decorations or activities. When we support our local economy, we are helping to keep our businesses and jobs in our community.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Lakeshore East rail corridor cuts diagonally through my riding, from the southwest corner up to Coxwell and Danforth. There has been a process ongoing of assessment for expansion of that rail line—very necessary transit improvements in the GTA. Just recently, on November 20, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change gave notice to proceed to Metrolinx, saying that they were satisfied with the documents that have been brought forward.

Speaker, there is great support in my riding for expansion of transit. But there is also great concern that it be done well, and that the people—the thousands of them who live along that rail line—have their interests protected in terms of noise, vibrations and the visual impact. People on Ivy Avenue, Wardell, De Grassi, McGee and people in old Riverdale have all expressed their concerns directly to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. As far as I can tell, none of their concerns are reflected in the document put out by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. That is very disturbing.

People engaged in this process on a good-faith basis. The credibility of the ministry and the credibility of Metrolinx are tied to whether or not they respond to legitimate concerns of this population. I expect to have talks with both of those bodies, but ignoring the public when they raise substantial and reasonable concerns reflects very badly on this government.

EVENTS IN BEACHES—EAST YORK

Mr. Arthur Potts: We have a very busy couple of weeks coming up in Beaches—East York. In addition to dozens of bazaars at churches and Christmas sales, we

have a number of very much larger events that make our community a truly special corner of the province.

This Saturday, we'll be lighting up East Lynn Park—it's near Danforth and Woodbine Avenue—with the help of the Danforth East Community Association. This is an amazing group that just recently celebrated their 10th anniversary. DECA runs a pioneering pop-up shop program, they operate a standout farmers' market, and they do incredible work with many refugee families that have come to Toronto. Congratulations on their anniversary.

On Sunday, I'll be marching in the Community Centre 55 annual Santa Claus parade, which helps generate funds for the hamper program. Throughout December, Centre 55 will have hundreds of volunteers donating, sorting, packing and delivering over 900 Christmas hampers to families and individuals in need in Beaches–East York. These packages include a full Christmas dinner as well as gifts for families, with turkey and trimmings, toys and personal care products, hand-knit mittens and much more, including food for their pets.

Next weekend in Beaches–East York, we will help light up the beach and Kew park in two events, one run by the DeClute-Union Realty company which sees trees lit up the length of our Beaches boardwalk in support of Michael Garron Hospital, and one by the Beaches Lions that brings a warm holiday glow to Kew park.

As you can tell, Speaker, we are spoiled for holiday spirit in Beaches–East York. I encourage all members to come down and enjoy our local festivities.

WOOF-A-PALOOZA

Mrs. Gila Martow: As a dog owner, I'm very excited to talk about the Woof-A-Palooza organization. It's a volunteer, not-for-profit organization that promotes and engages the dog community in the city of Vaughan and supports and creates awareness for animal shelters, rescues and other pet-related causes.

Last Friday, November 17, they had a big Fur Ball. Unfortunately, I could not attend—I was called to Montreal for a family emergency—but my friend Stephen Lecce was there, and he was walking a dog, Milo, a French bulldog, in the fashion show. The fashion show is the Paws'h Couture Fashion Show. And they had a dinner, a silent auction, a video presentation, a DJ, dancing and lots of fun.

I want to give a shout-out to the organizer and founder of the organization, Carina Paoletti, who is an animal control officer, a vet assistant and a pet groomer, and to her assistants Micayla Doria, the event coordinator, and Melissa Koutsaris, who is also an event coordinator as well as a registered vet technician.

Of course, there are lots of happy tales to tell, but this is a tail, T-A-I-L. June 10, 2018, will be the third annual Woof-A-Palooza event, so come to that with your dogs. I'm looking forward to seeing lots of registered pets there. I hope that everybody will do their best to support this initiative, and I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Woof. Thank you to all the members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE PHILIPPIN

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to proclaim the Month of June as Filipino Heritage Month/ Projet de loi 181, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine philippin.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As you're aware, members of Canada's Filipino community have been contributing to all aspects of Ontario's prosperity and diverse heritage for generations. I think recognizing their heritage in a month publicly in this province would be to everyone's advantage.

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

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

"Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the government's fair hydro plan could cost Ontarians up to \$4 billion more than necessary; and

"Whereas the Minister of Energy stonewalled attempts from the Auditor General to access documents and spent \$500,000 on legal fees to screen key documents of the hydro plan; and

"Whereas the Liberals' accounting rules go against Canadian public sector accounting standards and it will result in significant unnecessary costs for Ontarians; and

"Whereas the \$4 billion would fund 13,015 new hospital beds; instead, ratepayers have to pay for the Liberals' hydro scandal; and

"Whereas government is not looking out for the best interest of Ontarians but for themselves and their re-election; and

"Therefore, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Liberal government to issue an apology to the Auditor General and the people of Ontario."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Isabelle.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the north end of my riding. I would like to thank Mrs. Donna Foley from Capreol. It reads as follows:

“Whereas there continues to be a shortage of long-term-care beds in Ontario, resulting in the inappropriate use of acute care beds in Ontario’s hospitals; and

“Residents who do need secure long-term care are often forced to move away from their communities, families and friends;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To lift the moratorium on long-term-care licences so that the inventory of long-term-care spaces can be brought to a level that will ease the burden placed on Ontario’s hospitals; and

“Ensure that licences are granted for the creation of long-term-care spaces not only in cities but in smaller communities where residents are being forced to abandon everything they’ve ever known.”

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

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mrs. Gila Martow: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

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“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

Of course, I’m affixing my signature and giving it to page Javierar.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over northeastern Ontario. I would like to thank Mary Clarke from Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Etobicoke North.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I thank you, Speaker, for that recognition. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas podiatrists treat foot pain and injuries in women at twice the rate they treat men;

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

“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 send it to you via page Davis.

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas after more than a decade of mismanagement of Ontario’s energy sector, including the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, and the sale of surplus energy to

neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss have all put upward pressure on hydro bills; and

“Whereas a recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion by 2032 if nothing changes; and

“Whereas Ontarians and businesses can no longer afford the rising cost of hydro, with 567,000 residential electricity customers in arrears in 2015; and

“Whereas the CEO of Hydro One has a \$4-million salary compared to the Quebec CEO’s \$400,000 salary; and

“Whereas the sell-off of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and may lead to even higher hydro rates;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the sell-off of Hydro One, stop signing energy contracts we don’t need, address out-of-control executive pay and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills for all Ontarians.”

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

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the north end of my riding. I’d like to thank Dianne Secord and Richard Gravelle from Gogama. Here we go:

“Whereas Highway 661 is a three-kilometre secondary highway which links the town of Gogama to Highway 144 and is in extremely poor condition throughout the entire winter season; and

“Whereas Highway 661 is an essential highway which all emergency vehicles, school buses and other vehicles, including snowplows, must travel into and out of the community daily; and

“Whereas the low standard of winter maintenance of this highway, always snow-packed and icy, creates a serious public safety issue, putting at risk the lives of the area residents;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Increase the winter maintenance standard for this single-access highway into Gogama to ensure that the residents have safer access to their home community.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas podiatrists treat foot pain and injuries in women at twice the rate they treat men;

“Whereas Ontario podiatrists see far too many patients with injuries from the workplace that are entirely avoid-

able, and are caused by wearing footwear that is inappropriate or outright unsafe such as high heels;

“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 send it to you via my nephew Adam.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“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 increased 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 ... 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;

“Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario 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 and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels...;

“(3) To make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

“(4) To 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;” and, finally,

“(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.”

Of course, I’m affixing my signature and giving it to page Vanditha.

POLITIQUES ÉNERGÉTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais dire merci à Julie Marie Pharand de Capreol dans mon comté. La pétition dit:

« Entendu que les factures d’électricité sont devenues inabordable pour un trop grand nombre de personnes et que la réduction des factures d’électricité de 30 % pour les familles et les entreprises est une cible ambitieuse mais réaliste; et

« Entendu que la seule façon de réparer le système hydro-électrique est de s’attaquer aux causes de base des prix élevés, y compris la privatisation, les marges de profits excessives, la surabondance d’électricité et plus; et

« Entendu que les familles ontariennes ne devraient pas avoir à payer des primes du temps d’utilisation, et celles qui vivent dans une région rurale ou nordique ne devraient pas avoir à payer des frais de livraison plus élevés et punitifs; et

« Entendu que le retour de Hydro One comme propriété publique remettrait plus de 7 milliards de dollars à la province et à la population de l’Ontario; »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de « réduire les factures d’électricité pour les entreprises et les familles jusqu’à 30 %, éliminer les délais d’utilisation obligatoires, mettre fin aux coûts de livraison ruraux inévitables et rétablir la propriété publique d’Hydro One. »

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

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NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here submitted to me by Denise Brisson.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the northern Ontario travel grant offers financial help to northern Ontario residents that require to travel for medical issues;

“Whereas any northern Ontario resident that resides at 100 km or more is disqualified as the 100 km is the qualifier per trip;

“Whereas any resident residing over 100 km one way will not receive any financial help, representing thousands of dollars in additional expenses;

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

“That the northern Ontario travel grant review their qualifying criteria as 100 km one way....”

ORGAN DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario is currently facing one of the worst organ shortages in the world with one person dying every three days waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas over 85% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, yet only 30% of Ontarians are registered organ donors; and

“Whereas in 2006 the government of Ontario’s Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations recommended ‘improving awareness on the importance of organ donations, removing barriers to donation, improving how individuals can express their ... preferences and register their consent’; and

“Whereas in Ontario 21% of registered donors had their consent overturned by family members...;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Change legislation to allow a donor system based on ‘presumed consent’ as set out in MPP Gélinas’s Bill 177, Peter Kormos Memorial Act (Trillium Gift of Life Network Amendment), 2017; and

“Establish an organ donation education policy framework and require boards to include education on the importance of organ donation in the curriculum of students before receiving their Ontario secondary school diploma.”

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’d like to correct my record. In my last petition I said my page’s name incorrectly. I meant to say “Zunairah.” My apologies.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members always have the right to correct their record.

The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

FLOOD AVOIDANCE, INSURANCE AND RECOVERY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA PRÉVENTION DES INONDATIONS, LES ASSURANCES ET LA REPRISE APRÈS UNE INONDATION

Mr. Natyshak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Insurance Act and the Municipal Affairs Act in respect of flood avoidance, insurance and recovery / Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi sur les assurances et la Loi sur les affaires municipales concernant la prévention des inondations, les assurances et la reprise après une inondation.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is always an honour to rise in this House, and particularly on an issue that is born out of frustration from my area of southwestern Ontario, Windsor and Essex county, and I think representative of some measures of redress on the part of our constituents. With that being said, I hope that my colleagues in the House see merit in the bill, because I think it has some effect that could be positive and tangible and also a little bit of common sense.

Speaker, with that, the goal of the legislative regulatory change in this bill is to ensure that Ontarians are supported by policy and programs when they endure property damage due to a natural disaster involving flooding. After two separate and severe weather events in late September of 2016 and in August of 2017, local municipalities in my area declared states of emergency and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing activated the Ontario disaster recovery program.

Subsequently, our office and, I would imagine, many other offices of members across the province have been receiving numerous calls regarding both the private insurance and provincial programs that respond to measures of natural disasters. In this bill that we're debating today, I've attempted to address the most common frustrations that have been reported to our office.

The first recommendation comes as a result of reports that insured property owners were having their claims handled and then immediately cancelled, or were being advised by brokers that they should consider not filing the claim due to potential repercussions, such as non-renewal. This is largely due to the fact that a large number of these claimants were also forced to file claims for basement flooding from both the severe rain events that I had mentioned earlier.

In the course of our investigations and research of non-renewal, we spoke to the representative of the General Insurance OmbudService, the GIO. The GIO reported that the insurance industry uses what they refer to as the Habitational Insurance Tracking System, or HITS, as an acronym. This records the history of all property insurance claims for each insured property in Ontario. If a property has two similar claims within a three-year period, that policy is now deemed non-renewable. This further disadvantages the homeowner because this information is available only to all insurance providers, and is not available to the public in any form that we can find. Having this information, we believe, would make it

easier to verify whether or not claims following disasters are used against insured property owners.

Residents have also expressed complaints of being denied coverage under the Ontario disaster recovery program if it was determined that water entered through the municipal stormwater sewer system. When the entire region is being inundated with heavy rainfall, the water inevitably overwhelms all installed capacity, and the weak point for this is often the stormwater sewer system. This is clearly not a fault of the residents.

We believe that coverage should also include sewer backup for all residential properties which otherwise qualify under the program. It should also—this is a caveat as well—not be means-tested.

I met with a group of students, some remarkable students, at Holy Name grade school who, in my meeting with them, requested that I work with them to find a solution that they're tasked with as a robotics team. This year, the participants and the team—I want to give them a great shout-out; I know they'll be watching the clip here. Holy Name's robotics team is coached by Mike Nadalin and Mike Lamoureux. Team members include Lukas Allison, Alyssa Byrne, Lindsey Delaney, Emma Dunlop, Bryana McCarthy, Maddy Pierce, Lauren Schmidt, Emma Tellier, Alaina Thachuk and Carina Thachuk.

This year, the theme of the robotics team, through the First Lego League robotics competition, is to improve the ways that people find, transport, use or dispose of water. For their project, they decided to focus on rainwater and how they could better utilize it. This led the team to envisioning the use of rain barrels in residential areas to divert rainwater from our municipal system.

When I met with them—and I was just amazed by not only the robotics aspect but their problem-solving techniques and the way they work together as a team—I said, "Not only will I help you craft a potential bill, but I'm going to do you one better. I will integrate it into this bill."

Lo and behold, this is one of the provisions of the bill that I hope members see some merit in. The bill would change the regulations around the building code, and it would require new residential builds to install at least a 209-litre rain barrel.

In its singularity, on an individual basis, you would think, "What would a rain barrel do to mitigate against flooding?" Well, if we had this installed as a collective throughout our communities, it would have some serious potential. The Insurance Bureau of Canada endorsed the use of rain barrels when it conducted a pilot program in Prince Edward Island. They moved ahead and studied the use of old-fashioned rain barrels in communities, and found that when they installed close to 1,000 rain barrels, they had the ability to mitigate and disperse about 4.5% of the flow rate of water that would normally enter into a treatment facility. It is quite a bit, and it's enough to potentially avoid catastrophic flooding for regions. This is a \$100 solution, on an individual basis, that could solve a multi-million-dollar problem that all our municipalities are struggling with.

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Some municipalities have just installed new water mains and new sewage infrastructure and yet, because of the intensity and frequency of rainwater and stormwater that we're seeing entering into our communities due to climate change, due to the nature of the changing climate, they are at a point where they may have to dig up entire swaths of infrastructure to put in larger pipes to be able to have that capacity.

In my community of Lakeshore, Speaker, there was a motion moved by Councillor Wilder and seconded by Councillor Janisse that called on the government to do something about this, and to ensure that flood insurance programs cover individuals, families and businesses that are unable to secure flood insurance for their properties.

The third aspect of the bill would be that under the Ontario Disaster Relief Program that we have here, the response to homeowners' needs, in the case that their insurance fails to provide for them, doesn't cover sewage backup. That's something that we believe has to happen, because of the nature of the intensity of the floods.

Questioned by my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, whose community was very heavily hit, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said that the program does cover sewage water backup. Well, it actually doesn't. It doesn't cover it in response to a huge swath of damage that is catastrophic. It is also means-tested.

We are saying that this is something that people are looking for, something that could help them maintain home ownership and not be forced to move out of their communities, and something that we think is quite reasonable.

As I mentioned, when the government declares a state of emergency, people are being cut off by their insurance companies. This is regardless of whether they've ever had a claim. Some calls that we have received into our office are from folks who have lived in the same house and the same neighbourhood for 30 and 40 years and have never had a claim on their home. Now, due to the intensity of storms in our area and across the province, they have seen flooding like they've never seen before. When they are poised to put a claim in, they're being told, "Don't put a claim in, because you could potentially be cut off," or, after they put the claim in, their claim and their policy are cancelled. We just fundamentally believe that this is not fair. What it does is penalize people for living in an area where they can't determine where the next huge storm is going to happen.

I would ask my colleagues in the House to think about what this does to communities in the sense of real estate value and livability. If you have an area that has been hit, unfortunately, by these frequent and intense storms and has suffered flooding, and then whole neighbourhoods have had their home insurance policies cancelled, that essentially makes that area unlivable. That's certainly not the message that we want to send and the support that we need to provide for our communities.

I think this bill, as pretty simple as it is, goes a long way to mitigating the effects of climate change on our

communities. It puts some responsibility on new homeowners and new builds to do their part to retain stormwater. There are also some benefits of retaining stormwater. If you've got a garden or a lawn that you want to water, you have already captured some great rainwater from your roof and your eavestroughs to be able to water that. So there are some cost savings there.

But in all respects, Speaker, I believe that this bill is born out of fairness. It's born out of ingenuity from young leaders in our communities, who are going to be the next engineers and the next climate scientists, who are looking for solutions. It's a measure of, also, participatory democracy, where we get good ideas from our community and it is our responsibility, should we be given the opportunity, to bring them forward.

I'm incredibly proud to work with the young people at Holy Name school in Essex. Hopefully, again, my colleagues will see the merits of this bill and push it through the committee stage. Let's talk about it. I can't imagine that our response to our communities, when it comes to flooding, is that we can't do anything. Here's something that we can do and that will go a long way toward protecting homeowners in Ontario.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to stand today to speak in reference to Bill 179, the Flood Avoidance, Insurance and Recovery Statute Law Amendment Act. I'm just going to speak for a few moments because I have some first-hand experiences on it.

I can tell you that there are significant flooding occurrences, and people are displaced from their homes and sometimes lose lifelong memories. Whether it's personal objects, wedding photos, baptism photos, marriage pictures, family photos—you can go down a long, long list—you can never get them back.

There have also been significant local efforts from emergency responders and community members. All the communities that I'm familiar with have come to help those who have been subject to flood water and flood damage. Municipal leaders, of course, always lend a hand where they can and when they can.

To put in perspective how rapidly this is changing, the Insurance Bureau of Canada now tells us that the 2016 flood caused close to \$108 million in damage in a particular area, and the 2017 flood—still yet to be considered—was \$124 million in damage. Ladies and gentlemen, climate change is here, climate change is real, and it was of 20% significance of damage in this particular area, year over year.

I can tell you that there are a lot of other things that are happening on an ongoing basis. Whether it's residential or business—business at a lower level—there's always an opportunity for damage to occur. I can tell you that in an area northeast of Peterborough, there is a particular main highway that I will go down occasionally. There was rising water on a front yard of a residence, located up to the highway. Some three and a half feet the water was raised, actually touching the edge of the highway.

You can do a lot of things. You can have holding tanks, and they're supposed to be infallible. Let me tell you, a holding tank will hold it, but when it springs a leak, it spreads throughout the ground, it damages the ground and it inevitably ends up in the lake. And that's the major problem with that particular item.

I can tell you that in other areas, if it's a serious flood, no matter what you've done—you could have weeping tiles, new quarry rock around your rural area; you could have insulation protection—once the flood hits, you'll find that it's not only getting rid of the water, replacing the floor, doing all of those good things. Water rises. It comes up the wall. So you'll have to tear apart a level of your home some two feet to three feet high on a lower level. Once there is a flood on a year-round cottage, the drainage that is supposed to go away doesn't necessarily go away.

I happen to be familiar with someone who has gone through a sump pump system, still been flooded, still had damage and put in a second industrial-type sump pump so that that now works. So, there is a fallback to the system: Two systems are operating independently, and they will fluctuate from one to the other to make sure that the water is on the way out.

I think this is a good bill. I think there are a lot of positive things here. I wish I had more time to speak to it. It's a step in the right direction, and I'm pleased to be part of it.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're speaking today on the member from Essex's private member's bill on the Flood Avoidance, Insurance and Recovery Statute Law Amendment Act. We all know horror stories. I know that he is speaking from personal, recent experience in Windsor of horrific flooding there. But I want to focus a little bit on York region, where we have some serious flooding problems up in our area, specifically in the Thornhill area, which I represent, which is partly in the city of Vaughan and partly in the city of Markham.

The city of Markham has been spending millions of dollars addressing stormwater and flood planning. I have just a few of the documents here in front of me. This one is the West Thornhill Stormwater Flood Control Implementation Strategy, prepared by Robert Muir, senior stormwater/environmental engineer, asset management. It was authored on October 14, 2011, so this has been an ongoing problem and concern.

Many of the old villages that we have in Ontario were built around mills, which were built on rivers and often were a flood risk, but they needed to be near the river, and I guess they built in accordance with that necessity. These areas have historic significance, so we're not looking to tear them down, of course. But one problem, as well, is that oftentimes people do build in an area where there is no flooding, but because of development near them, it becomes a flood problem. So it's not for people to say, "Well, they shouldn't have built there"; that is the

case often. But more often than not, we are seeing redevelopment of areas, and subsequently we're seeing flooding.

I would remind everybody that basements maybe are not the place to store personal, irreplaceable family mementoes, but often people do.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada is very concerned with this bill, and I wanted to just point out some of their concerns. They feel that taxpayer-funded coverage could create a moral hazard and would incentivize individuals and communities to disregard the risk of flooding if they felt that the government was just going to somehow take care of it all. So I think that it's very important for any piece of legislation to work with the insurers and ensure that their concerns are being met.

I think that we all understand that Canadians, specifically here in Ontario, could face financial ruin due to flooding. It's a big problem, not just for residents but for businesses as well. So often now, our businesses are working up to the minute in terms of their supplies. If their supplies get damaged in flooding or they can't get deliveries of their supplies or their products to market, it creates a terrible problem.

I want to mention that somebody I spoke to who is an insurance broker said that insurance is for—and this is his quote—"a chance that a loss would occur." It's not a maintenance contract. Flood coverage, in his opinion, is not available in places like New Orleans, or earthquake coverage in California, because in those cases, it's not a "might"; it's going to happen. Those low-lying areas are going to have flood losses.

I think that that is what we are here to discuss: what we can do to help in the event of flooding. But we have to work with our partners at the municipal level, and we have to work with our partners in the insurance industry as well.

I just want to remind everybody in Thornhill that August 19, 2005, was when we had—in my area, we called Beverly Glen Boulevard the Beverly Glen River; on the news that night, you couldn't even see the sidewalks—quite horrific.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House—today, on Bill 179, a bill brought forward by my colleague from Essex. One thing I always appreciate about my colleague from Essex: He always has a straightforward, practical approach. That can be maddening sometimes in this place—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Especially for whips.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, especially for whips—but on behalf of his constituents, I think it's a huge asset. This bill is a testament to that because it's a straightforward, practical approach to weather-related disasters. This issue, whether you're covered by insurance or not—flood insurance or sewer backup—is, quite frankly, one of those issues you don't think about until it happens to you. This isn't at the top of anybody's mind until it happens, and it's one of those things that you naturally assume would be covered, right?

Just a little sidebar—and my colleague from Timmins–James Bay can relate to this; he had a constituent who uncovered a 50-year-old dead body. Everyone assumed that when you uncover a dead body in the province of Ontario, that actually should be a public responsibility. But, in Ontario, in that case, the coroner had no interest, the government had no interest, and the owner of the land was expected to take care of the dead body.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: True story.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's lucky that they don't film Cold Case in Ontario, because we don't do cold cases in Ontario. Sorry about that, to the member—he was challenging me on what I was going to talk about.

Getting back to the member from Essex: He identifies the problem. The problem is that his constituents and people across the province think that they're insured when they're not. So he wants to clarify it so they know. He identified an issue that—if a state of emergency is called, that shouldn't default your ability to get insurance, because an emergency is just that. You don't expect an emergency to happen on a regular basis in a certain area. A place that floods regularly or is in a flood plain—well, that's not really a state of emergency. A state of emergency is a hurricane or a tornado or a massive flood or a massive downpour. That shouldn't default you from being able to get insurance.

What I really like about this bill is that it doesn't solely rely—or demand—on the government to change things for the past, or demand on just changing the wording; it provides a practical solution, going forward, for new construction: a rain barrel or a cistern, in effect, which they used to have many years ago. Not only is that good for the environment because, as the member said, you can use the water to water your lawn or your garden, but, in a very practical way, that holding tank, if you have a rain event, will delay the surge. That's basically what it does: It's delaying the surge. So instead of having everything going right away into the stormwater drain and having it back up—stormwater and sewer water are on a collision course in an event like that. By forcing, in new construction—and, Speaker, when you're doing new construction, spending a couple of hundred dollars putting in a tank for your rain water, as a percentage of the bill, is infinitesimal, but it could make a huge difference.

That's what I like about this bill. It identifies a problem that very few people in this province, unless they've lived through it, know is a problem, and it offers several practical solutions. I can't remember the exact date, and perhaps the member from Essex knows, but they had an open-line show about flooding and about how most people in the province didn't know that, when it came down to it, a lot of people aren't covered. So it's not just an issue for Essex. It's not even just an issue for Ontario, but it's a good place to start.

I'm very proud to be able to speak on behalf of this bill and on behalf of the member from Essex, who, once again, put forward a very practical solution, which I actually can support this time.

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

1400

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's great to stand in the House this afternoon—although my voice probably doesn't sound like me, it is me—to speak on Bill 179, the Flood Avoidance, Insurance and Recovery Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017. I want to start by thanking the member from Essex for bringing this act forward and having us debate this here this afternoon.

We know that in the Windsor area, some residents have had their homes flooded twice in less than a year. I understand that this is a difficult time, a difficult situation for many people in Ontario who have had their homes damaged by flooding this year. Our thoughts go out to them because it is a difficult time. Sometimes it's families losing all of their memories and photos, and I can only imagine all sorts of different cherishable things that they may have lost in a flood.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs was on the ground in Windsor after both of the events to meet residents and speak with the mayors. These are significant occurrences. People are displaced from their homes and sometimes lose lifelong memories, as I just referred to. There have also been significant local efforts from emergency responders, community members and municipal leaders to lend a hand where they can.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada tells us that the 2016 flood caused close to \$108 million in insured damage and the 2017 flood was \$124 million in insured damage.

The Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians program is there to provide assistance in case of overland flooding where insurance isn't widely available. The program also provides assistance to low-income residents who have experienced sewer backup. It is the only program in Canada that offers this type of coverage. DRAO, the disaster recovery assistance program, offers financial assistance to help cover emergency expenses and costs to repair or replace essential property. It can help replace things like a dining room set, essential appliances, and repair structural damage to your home.

While there are eligibility criteria, the DRAO has provided millions of dollars in needed financial assistance to Ontarians. We expanded the activation area for the recent Windsor-Essex flood and also extended the deadline for all applications in the Windsor area to March 20, 2018. Currently, we have only received 128 applications. There is still time to apply, and we would ask for the area MPPs' help in encouraging people to apply for a program that helps people get back on their feet.

The disaster recovery program was recently re-designed by our government with the guidance of the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and with the input of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. At the time of the review, the president of AMO was Tecumseh mayor Gary McNamara, a mayor in the county of Essex and in the riding of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. We also consulted the Red Cross and the Insurance Bureau of Canada and asked for feed-

back from the public. Thanks to their input, we eliminated the need for local fundraising, meaning that eligible households get financial assistance faster so they can focus on getting their lives back in order. When we were consulting on the new program, neither opposition party expressed an interest in providing input.

The number of natural disasters in Ontario has increased sharply over the past decade or so. Between 2005 and 2010, there were 17 declared disasters in the province, requiring \$8 million in provincial assistance. Between 2010 and 2015, there were 43 declared disasters, requiring over \$36 million in provincial assistance. So redesigning the programs to make them more accessible was absolutely necessary. That's what we've done with the help of our municipal partners. The result is a program that is faster, fairer and more transparent.

The DRAO program provides assistance to low-income residents who have experienced sewer backup. It is the only program in Canada that offers this type of coverage. I have said that twice because it's important to recognize. I'll say it three times: It's the only program in Canada that offers that type of coverage.

During consultations, we heard that low-income Ontarians did not always have the means to purchase insurance and that they were often living in basement apartments, usually where these floods took place. We added this provision to the program so that they could receive financial assistance.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say that we all have a role to play when it comes to protecting against damage from natural disasters. The province has a strong record of supporting municipalities with funding for infrastructure that can help mitigate the effect of a natural disaster. Unfortunately, disasters can still occur, and that is why Ontario offers assistance when a natural disaster damages municipal infrastructure or leads to extraordinary emergency response costs.

I just want to say once again that we have expanded the activation area for the recent Windsor–Essex flood and that applications to the area are due by March 20, 2018. We have only received 128 applications to date and encourage those who have been affected to apply before the deadline.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to speak to Bill 179, and I particularly appreciate the member from Essex talking about the background of why he incorporated rain barrels into this bill, because at first reading you wonder why we've matched rain barrels with insurance, but it all makes sense now, and kudos to you.

I would also, frankly, like to give a shout-out to ecoCaledon. They are an amazing group of volunteers who build rain barrels. I was part of one of their work groups about three years ago in Brampton at the Coca-Cola plant. We were brought together—there were probably 20 or 30 of us—and for the morning, we built rain barrels. You put the spouts in, and it was great. They didn't let me use the power tools, but other than that, it was a fun day.

What they do is, they get local artists to paint those rain barrels and then they put them throughout Caledon and people bid on them. In about mid-June, when the need for a rain barrel becomes a little more imminent, they raffle them off. I want to give a shout-out to ecoCaledon for doing that excellent work.

We have had a rain barrel at our own home for many, many years. To the member's point, it's simple, it makes sense, and if you're a gardener, plants like water that isn't freezing cold out of the tap. So it helps the municipality deal with their stormwater issues, and it helps the homeowner.

This bill has some tie-ins to a private member's bill that I brought forward. It relates to public notification when sewage bypasses must occur. We all understand that in Windsor, 150 millimetres of rain, I think it was, fell in basically under 24 hours. When those kinds of heavy weather incidents occur, often municipalities are forced to do bypasses of their water treatment and sewage treatment plants. My private member's bill would ensure that the public knows when that occurs. Frankly, I have seen far too many Facebook posts and photos where people are playing with this water, and, not to get too gross on a Thursday afternoon, Speaker, that's not just rainwater they are playing in.

The public does have a right to know and should be made aware of the dangers of playing in that kind of situation, and our municipalities could use a little help explaining to their taxpayers the value and the importance of keeping and maintaining proper infrastructure related to their underground pipes.

That is what my private member's bill would do. It ties in nicely to Bill 179, which I have renamed the "Windsor flood private member's bill," and good luck to the member as they move through committee. I hope it can pass.

1410

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two or three things about this bill: first of all, the practicality of the rain barrel part of it. I think my colleague the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane raised it well: that the member from Essex brings forward, I think, a really practical, possible solution, or help at least, towards the problem of surging water going into our municipal systems when it comes to floods. When you think about it, it's so simple that it's funny that nobody has ever done this before and municipalities haven't tried to go in this direction. We all know, when you have one of those huge rains that happen all of a sudden, if everybody has a rain barrel, you're able to capture some of that water and slow down the rush of the water going into your municipal water system when it comes to both the storm sewers and the actual sewer systems that we have in our municipalities. It's a really simple approach. It won't eliminate the possibility of flood damage, but I think it very much, in a lot of cases, would prevent damage from happening. When you figure the amount of money it costs to put in a rain barrel, it's a

pretty simple thing. I commend the member for bringing that forward. Just for that, I think it's a bill that's well worth supporting and hopefully will see the light of day at committee and eventually end up back here in the House.

The issue in regard to sewer backup insurance—I guess I'm saying it right—is the other part, and on that one, I don't think there's a member in this House who hasn't had to deal with this issue at one time or another, where somebody lives somewhere where there has been a rainfall that has hit the particular area really heavily. The person, rightfully so, says, "I bought the insurance, so I go to my insurance company in order to be able to get the insurance and get the sewer damage on the backup done." They get themselves covered and then they find out there is some other occurrence that happens that may not even be, in some cases, a surge of water; it might actually be the municipal system that had some difficulty. All of a sudden, they're not insured anymore because they put the claim in. I've had that—I don't know—countless times.

For example, out behind the Porcupine Mall in the city of Timmins, there's an area where they've had problems with the sewer system. They often get backups in that area because even the slightest amount of surge water from a rain that might be a little bit more than normal—we're not even talking a big storm—causes backup. So there are a whole bunch of residents there who I've dealt with over the years who have no insurance. They get damage down in their basements—and we're not talking about a basement where you store things; we're talking about a finished basement where people have living rooms and they've got kids' bedrooms and different things down there—and they're not able to get the insurance in order to do repairs on the damages done. Clearly, that's not fair.

You can't choose where there's going to be a rainfall. Rainfalls just happen. It's God's way or nature's way. I look at my friend from the United Church here; I had to use that word just because I saw you there. But we don't choose where rainfalls are going to happen, and sometimes they don't happen in the same place to the same severity, but sometimes they do. I think it's kind of ridiculous to be in a situation where you can't get your insurance because you happen to live in an area that once got hit with rainfall. It's like saying, "We're not insuring that particular possibility." So I think the member is right to try to redress that wrong.

I want to just, in the last two minutes, touch on the issue that was raised by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and that is of a constituent in my riding who found a dead body on his property. This is something that a lot of people may not be aware of. He has a property outside of the city limits. He was doing some work on this property in order to do what it is that he bought the property for. He does some excavation and a bone shows up—oh, my God. What is it? So he goes out and calls the police, who call the coroner, who comes in. The initial thought was, "Well, it might be an aboriginal burial site."

They say, "Oh, well, no, actually it's not." This is a Caucasian male, is what they then thought, and they thought that the body had been there for some 50 years plus. It turns out that the coroner can take the position that there's no significant interest on the part of the coroner's office, which means to say it becomes the citizen's responsibility to dispose of the corpse. Well, you're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars, because you have to do archaeological work in order to determine the story around this body. No responsible person is going to just dig a body out and dump it somewhere else. It's just not the way we do things. Again, kind of in light of what is going on here, it should be a provincial responsibility, it should be a societal responsibility, to deal with it.

Now, the irony to this story is that we have been doing a lot of work in our constituency office. Tina Chartrand, who works in my office, has done really stellar work on this one. I have dealt with the ministers responsible here on a number of occasions to try to move this thing along and to try to find a way so that this individual is not stuck with the cost of having to move and properly dispose of the body.

Now we're beginning to think that it is not a 50-year-old body. There has been some work done on the part of the archaeological people and they are now thinking that the body is not more than 10 or 15 years old and is a young woman 22 or 23 years old. If that does not ring the alarm bells to anybody, including the police, the coroner's office and others, I don't know what will. We are still fighting, and I don't mean fighting this way, but we're still struggling and trying to get the coroner's office to take the type of interest, because it's a matter of, is it a 23-year-old female body or is it a 50-plus-year-old male body? For some reason, they are saying that there are no old case files, no—what do they call those?—cold case files over 50 years, which I think is ridiculous.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I do want to say, before I get into this, that I would yield the floor back to the member from Timmins–James Bay because I'd like to hear the conclusion and end of that anomaly. So he will have to let us know what ends up happening in that story. It is an anomaly and it's very interesting to hear him tell that story.

But I want to speak to Bill 179, the Flood Avoidance, Insurance and Recovery Statute Law Amendment Act. I want to congratulate the member, the MPP from Essex, for putting it forward. He is responding to something that has occurred in his community that was very serious and affected the lives of many people.

We had adverse events in Ottawa South, not to the extent that they've had in Windsor, but there were certain pockets just a few weeks ago where people experienced great challenges. What I did not expect—I was out knocking on doors on Adams Avenue, I think it was, and there was one of those PUPS containers outside. I said, "What happened?" She said, "Well, my basement had six

inches of water in it.” She said, “All the rain came down to the basin at the bottom of the street.” She was covered by insurance. One of the challenges around insurance is, and I hear the point members make about—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I’m pleased to rise in support of this private member’s bill from the member from Essex, Bill 179, the Flood Avoidance, Insurance and Recovery Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017.

As we all know, what prompted this was the recent “storm of the century” that wreaked havoc on the people of Windsor and left 6,000 basements flooded. His colleague and my friend, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, also shared a lot of that detail with me. The recovery issues really arose after it was discovered that a majority of the residents there were not eligible for compensation through the province’s disaster recovery assistance program. The government argued it was not its responsibility to cover damages caused by sewer backups because those should be covered by private insurance plans, but it doesn’t really help the person who had the six inches of water or three feet of water in their basement, Madam Speaker.

Bill 179, in my understanding, aims to fix that in three ways:

—Avoidance: amending the Building Code Act to mandate that a residential building must have a rainwater tank of at least 204 litres;

—Insurance: amending the Insurance Act to make property insurance claims for residential properties public information, and flood insurance shall not be declined on the basis of flooding if the flooding took place in a declared emergency;

—Recovery: amending the Municipal Affairs Act to provide disaster recovery assistance for residential properties that suffer flooding from sewer backup, without means or income testing.

In other words, this legislation would ensure that disaster recovery funds flow to property owners who experience water damage from sewer backup if the Legislature has approved such funds. We agree that more can be done to prevent these types of incidents from happening and to better assist those who are facing hardship due to flooding, and this bill provides better protection for homeowners. The people of Windsor were left out of the province’s disaster relief program, and that’s not right.

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Madam Speaker, in my riding, constituents faced a similar predicament in 2015 and 2016. Williamsford residents were getting the runaround from the province’s flood relief program administrators. This happened in the spring of 2016 when the North Saugeen River flooded Williamsford, damaging homes and businesses along with municipal infrastructure. It was a once-in-200-years flood, and Chatsworth township declared a state of emergency. The files have all luckily now been looked after, but it took prodding and it took going public with concerns to get results. One poor gentleman had lost his

false teeth, and they wouldn’t even have compassion to help him out in that case, so you can understand how much people suffer.

Similarly, Owen Sound suffered losses in 2015, with water mains being frozen. I believe that the member from Davenport in her comments could have led you to believe that the government is always there for municipalities when they need it and they have these types of disasters. I can tell you, in Owen Sound, it was an unprecedented event—317 frozen services and 50 water main breaks, costing the city \$2.1 million to remedy—and the government did nothing to help them out, despite us trying to find a way to get assistance.

Owen Sound had to replace about 1.5 kilometres of water mains, and this crisis emptied out the city’s reserve fund, which actually took 10 years to build up. Yet when they applied to the Liberal government for some emergency management funding, they were sadly denied—no assistance was given. Owen Sound’s challenge was and is its small tax base, as it puts great limits on its ability to respond to unexpected disasters such as frozen water pipes.

Madam Speaker, I continually suggest in this Legislature that if the government of the day didn’t waste so much money, I’m sure there would have been money there to help out the taxpayers of Owen Sound. It’s shameful that when they waste billions of dollars—just recently in the Fair Hydro Act, they borrowed \$25 billion, and they know that by moving some of the money onto OPG’s books, it’s \$4 billion off the top—what could we have done for the victims in Windsor, the victims in Owen Sound, who have suffered through this?

The minister of the day seemed sympathetic—and I will give the minister credit for that—to the concerns raised by Owen Sound in this inequity, but, in the end, sadly, nothing did happen.

Again, I believe the government can and should be a better partner to all municipalities by ensuring that, in an emergency, it does step up and find the resources to help everyone rebuild and get through the predicament that they find themselves in. We should be working with municipalities as they improve their infrastructure to deal with flooding incidents. The emotional and financial toll endured by flood victims is significant. We need to work to ensure that they have the support that they need.

I’m pleased to support this bill from the member from Essex. I hope that the people in the House will also find a way to support and move this through to legislation so that the next time something happens, people will rest assured that the government truly is there on their behalf.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to really thank my colleagues in the House who have spoken to the bill: the members for Ajax–Pickering, Thornhill, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Davenport, Dufferin–Caledon, Timmins–James Bay, Ottawa South and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I want to also thank my assistant, Jody Percy, who put a lot of the information and data together to bring this bill forward. So thanks, Jody, for doing that.

It seems like we've all given some thought to this issue, which isn't much thought of until it happens to one of our constituents. I appreciate the common-sense comments that members have made. I hope that this resonates and has some merit to be seen through this House and to be debated throughout its stages.

I did not anticipate talking about dead bodies. That one came out of nowhere, but it's an interesting story. I guess it does segue, somehow, when we're talking about government responsibility—these unforeseen, unanticipated scenarios that come into our lives where there is no solution.

I think it is our job to identify those gaps and to provide a solution. As I said in my 12-minute hit, I don't think that there's nothing we can do here, if that's proper English. I think that there is definitely something we can do, and I hope that the provisions built into this bill are a step forward, because we can't do nothing. This is going to continue to happen. Our communities are going to continue to suffer. We're going to leave swaths of our communities, particularly urban areas, uninsurable and therefore uninhabitable. You have to have home insurance. It's protecting your most major asset, and I think it's incumbent upon us as a Legislature to do everything we can to do that.

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

REDUCING WASTE ONE POD
AT A TIME ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017
SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS
CAUSÉS PAR LES CAPSULES

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act respecting the sale of single-use beverage pods / Projet de loi 173, Loi sur la vente de capsules de boisson à usage unique.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill 173, the Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act. If passed, my private member's bill would require all single-use coffee pods sold in Ontario to be certified compostable. It is my hope that Bill 173 will make Ontario a global leader in waste reduction while supporting a made-in-Ontario innovation and local businesses.

To begin, I'd like to recognize some important stakeholders who have joined us here today to observe the debate. I want to start with the folks from Muskoka Roastery Coffee, a company in Huntsville that first introduced me to the idea of compostable coffee pods. In the members' west gallery we have Doug Burns, CEO of Muskoka Roastery; Patricia Snell, co-founder of Mus-

koka Roastery; and Jordan McKenzie, marketing manager of Muskoka Roastery.

From Club Coffee, the Toronto company that worked with the University of Guelph to develop the PurPod100 certified compostable coffee pod, we have Solange Ackrill, vice-president of marketing.

Unfortunately, the dean of the school of agriculture at the University of Guelph was unable to be here today, but I want to recognize Rene Van Acker, who did participate in the news conference that I held on November 1.

Also here today are Steve Ahier and Bill Reilly from Genpak of Aurora, which makes the compostable lids.

Here from Wingham, in the riding of Huron-Bruce, is Brad Harrow of BI-AX, which makes polylactic acid, one of the components of the compostable lid.

I'm also joined by Danielle Buklis, a program outreach manager at the Compost Council of Canada.

Last, but certainly not least, we have Bob Chant, senior vice-president of corporate affairs at Loblaw Companies, who is here because President's Choice also offers its products in PurPod100 certified compostable coffee pods. Please welcome them.

Additionally, I want to thank legislative counsel, and Bradley Warden in particular, for providing the support necessary to bring this bill into existence. And of course, I want to thank my legislative intern, Cassandra Loewen, who has done an amazing job on this private member's bill, and my executive assistant, Lesley Daw.

Last month, the Environmental Commissioner said it clearly: "Ontario has a waste problem." In a year, each Ontarian creates, on average, 1,800 pounds of waste, only 25% of which is recycled. According to the government's own research, the amount of waste produced by Ontarians is expected to increase by 40% by 2050, requiring the creation of 16 new landfills.

Packaging, mainly made of plastics, constitutes one quarter of the waste produced by Ontarians. Plastic takes hundreds of years to break down, contributes to pollution and threatens ecosystems, especially when it ends up in our lakes and oceans.

Single-serve coffee pods are a large source of plastic waste. The single-serve coffee industry has grown rapidly. They are currently the number-one-selling household appliance and can be found in 38% of Canadian homes. About 49% of coffee sold in stores is in the single-serve format.

Unfortunately, the packaging used in this popular beverage system contributes significantly to Ontario's waste problem. Some 1.5 billion coffee pods end up in Canadian landfills every year. Sending coffee grounds to landfill in non-compostable coffee pods not only takes up valuable space, it also contributes to climate change.

Even the inventor of Keurig's K-Cups is uncomfortable with the amount of post-consumer waste being produced. In an interview in the Atlantic in 2015, John Sylvan admitted he regrets creating the disposal coffee-pod system.

I wish to stress, however, that the problem has to do with packaging, not with the practice of brewing single-

serve coffee. In fact, compared to standard drip coffee, single-serve coffee is more efficient and uses less water and less energy.

There are two ways to keep single-serve coffee pods out of landfill: The first is to make single-serve coffee pods recyclable; the second and, in my opinion, superior option is to make them compostable.

While there are some recyclable coffee pods on the market, their usage is not yet widespread and they come with two significant drawbacks. First, recycling coffee pods is not convenient. Consumers need to wait for the hot pod to cool down, remove the welded-on foil lid, dump the coffee grounds in the compost, remove the internal filter and wash the cup. Only then can they place it in recycling. For a product predicated on convenience, it is unlikely that many consumers will take the time to properly recycle the pod. Recyclable coffee pods are most likely to either head straight to the landfill or be recycled incorrectly, becoming a contaminant and driving up costs.

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Second, even if the coffee pod is recycled properly by the consumer, small, plastic packaging, especially food packaging, is generally sorted out of the recycling stream due to fears of contamination, despite claims to the contrary.

The National Post reported that in Toronto, “The pods are too light and small to be detected by sorting machines or the plant’s workers, so they head to landfill.” For these reasons, recyclable coffee pods are not the best way to reduce waste; the best solution is to make them compostable.

Club Coffee, a company based here in Toronto, teamed up with the University of Guelph’s Bioproducts Discovery and Development Centre to produce the world’s first certified 100% compostable coffee pod. This is an impressive achievement and is certainly a good-news story of research, innovation and entrepreneurship in our province.

Tests have shown that the PurPod100 breaks down in as little as five weeks—faster than many items accepted into municipal green bin programs. Because the whole pod and its contents are compostable, consumers can simply throw the whole thing into the green bin.

In addition to Club Coffee’s, certified compostable pods are sold by Café Liégeois Canada in Montreal and by Rogers Family Coffee in California. There are more compostable designs in development, including two coming out of British Columbia: Canterbury Coffee has a partially compostable pod that they’re working on making fully compostable, and G-Pak is expected to introduce a fully certified compostable pod early next year.

Why, then, have certified compostable coffee pods not become the industry standard? It’s not because industrial composting is inaccessible in Ontario. In a TVO blog post, Keurig Canada claimed that “less than 1%” of people in Canada “have access to industrial composting facilities.” This is patently false. According to the Min-

istry of Environment and Climate Change, 37 municipalities in Ontario offer green bin programs. These 37 municipalities represent 70% of Ontario’s population.

The most significant obstacle is fear of contamination. I understand that municipalities are concerned that confused consumers will attempt to compost non-compostable coffee pods. This would require extra sorting of the compost and cost municipalities and local taxpayers money.

Greg Preston, the director of waste management for the city of Orillia, told me that while the PurPod100 successfully broke down in his facility, the public is not being encouraged to compost their coffee pods because of fears of contamination.

As a recent article in *Municipal World* describes, “Ontario’s municipalities have challenged the makers to standardize the design for the pods and to settle on one method for managing them.” This is where my private member’s bill comes in. If only certified compostable single-serve coffee pods are on the market, then the problem of compost being contaminated with non-compostable pods would be effectively eliminated.

I recognize the concerns of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Municipal Waste Association that variation among municipal compost systems may also mean variation in the extent to which compostable pods successfully break down; that is why there is a four-year wait before Bill 173 would come into effect. Municipalities, like industry, need time to plan and prepare for the new and promising frontier that is compostable packaging.

That is also why I state clearly for the record that municipalities will need support from either the province or the producers of manufactured compostable products to improve and expand their organics programs so they can accept certified compostable packaging with confidence.

As you may recall, Madam Speaker, I introduced a bill on product stewardship twice before the government introduced the Waste-Free Ontario Act, so I agree with the principle behind producer responsibility.

With the Waste-Free Ontario Act, the government has endorsed the concept of a circular economy in which resources are continually reused. The compost processed by compostable coffee pods is in itself a valuable resource that will re-enter the economy. In fact, when President’s Choice started using the PurPod100 in 2016, Glen Murray, the then Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, said: “A priority of the government of Ontario, through the recently passed Waste-Free Ontario Act, is encouraging innovation in consumer packaging, eventually moving towards a circular economy in Ontario. Today’s announcement is a great example of that innovation in action.”

After I introduced Bill 173, Mr. Murray congratulated me on Twitter for my “leadership on moving Ontario to a more circular economy.”

Moreover, the government’s proposed Food and Organic Waste Framework, released last week, dedicates

a section to “compostable products and packaging.” This framework recognizes compostable products and packaging as a new and emerging waste stream that will create new challenges and opportunities in waste management. It says these products should be diverted for beneficial use but that work needs to be done to “better integrate these new types of packaging into Ontario’s circular economy.”

The next section of the proposed Food and Organic Waste Framework is entitled “Support Resource Recovery Infrastructure.” It says, “Ontario will need to support existing resource recovery systems and develop additional capacity to process food and organic waste.” I agree with the government on this issue. We do need to find more and better ways to recover the resources found in our food and organic waste, and there is a need for the government to support municipalities throughout this period of expansion and innovation.

As the Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act demonstrates, there is no inherent contradiction between environmental stewardship and business success. Bill 173 would benefit ecosystems and the climate by reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill. It would benefit municipalities by dramatically reducing contamination as well as provide the certainty and time needed to plan for the new reality of compostable packaging. It would benefit innovators in Ontario by enabling their product to reach its full potential. It would benefit the 250 people who are now employed by Club Coffee, not to mention their suppliers. It would benefit consumers by providing them with a sustainable and convenient way to reduce their environmental footprint.

I can see I’m almost out of time. I’ve been speaking quickly to try to get this whole speech in, but I’ll do the rest in my last couple of minutes when I have time.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s always an honour to rise in this House, but it’s a pleasure to speak to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka’s bill. Needless to say, we are in support of this bill, so I’ll say that right off the bat. I also want to welcome our guests and admit to being a bit of a coffee snob—and also to have it in the family. My son started Capital Espresso in our own riding of Parkdale–High Park and then went on to win, in one year, the brewing championship for all of Canada and represented us in Italy.

When I think coffee, I think a really good espresso machine or I think French press at home with ground beans that were ground before you make the French press. I don’t think pods. Having said that, I listened with interest to my colleague talking about how it actually uses less energy to use a compostable pod than to do it the way I am used to drinking it—again, a bit of a coffee snob there.

I want to give a shout-out, first of all, to those who make coffee in my riding, all of them, and to the indie coffee stores everywhere and in particular to the staff of Capital Espresso. My son is no longer part of that

business. He sold his shares a while back, but certainly it still remains a hub of one of our neighbourhoods, and that is very clearly the case.

Certainly, the other thing I’ll say about indie coffee houses in the city of Toronto, part of which I represent, is that what put Capital on the map initially was that they had a policy where if you had a coffee at different indie coffee houses around the city of Toronto—they called it a “customer disloyalty plan”—then you could get a free coffee at any one of them. So here’s to indie business and small business everywhere.

I was particularly interested in him talking about producer responsibility. Really what this bill points to is a larger environmental issue, which, sooner or later, we’re going to have to deal with here in this place, because quite frankly, we are not dealing with it very well right now.

We’re coming up to the holiday season. We’re coming up to a season where we’re giving presents to each other. We’ve all had the experience of walking into a big box store and getting something that is hugely over-packaged. If I might suggest—I’ve started it myself—a bit of a customer rebellion: Take the packaging off at the store. Leave it there so you don’t have to recycle it, and just take the goods home yourself. That sends a message to our retailers, who will then send a message to the manufacturers that we really need to have producer responsibility here.

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We really do need to take responsibility for what we put out there. I know it looks cute on the shelves, but we don’t like it, we consumers. We’d rather not have to deal with it. I’m sure the retailers feel the same; they don’t want to deal with it either. So let’s start where the product is manufactured and do it environmentally safely there—again, just a thought.

He also talked about the need in the bill for municipal support. This is a constant theme in this place, because often we pass bills here and often we make moves and we forget that some of the cost is going to be borne by our municipalities of whatever it is we decide, under whatever ministry we decide it. So, again, I think that’s very, very important, that we have to be mindful that what we do has costs for some of our smaller municipalities. Even for the big one that I’m in, Toronto: I use the example of even our moves in the transportation sphere. Certainly we need better transportation in Toronto and the government has made some major moves, but the problem is that the city of Toronto has to pay for the operational costs. They’re left with the year-to-year problem of funding the new lines, the new subway stations, the new systems.

We propose what we used to have in Ontario, and that’s that this government pay 50% of the operational costs of the TTC like we used to. All parties in government used to do that. Harris got rid of it, and it has never been brought back. That needs to happen. And it needs to happen not just in transportation but, as the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka pointed out, it needs to happen

when we pass legislation here, that we be mindful of the cost of putting that legislation into practice at the municipal level. There is so much that is included in that. Much as, of course, we fought for the \$10 minimum wage raise and absolutely we fought for the \$15 minimum wage raise, I know that's going to cost the city of Toronto a significant amount of money. Is the government going to help out with that? Is the provincial government going to do something to make that possible?

Some very important larger issues were touched on in this bill. Absolutely we support it. And, who knows, maybe one day I will try a pod coffee.

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

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to Bill 173, Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act. I want to begin by thanking the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this bill to the House. This is a very important bill, and on this side of the House we are fully in agreement with the general premises of this act. We will support the general premises of this act. In the meantime, it's very nice to see that our colleagues from the Conservative Party now are finally talking and taking some interest in environmental issues. I'm so glad to see that. Thank you very much for that.

As we all know, climate change is true. The science proves that climate change is happening and that we need to do whatever we can to prevent climate change. When it comes to prevention of climate change and reducing emissions to the atmosphere, of course waste diversion, recycling and reusing is very important and very key.

We have to take it one item by one item. As the member rightly brought up this bill to this House, it's a major step. It's one of the major steps forward in terms of reducing emissions to the climate.

I just wanted to give some numbers with regard to emissions. For example, in 2014 alone, 11.5 million tonnes of waste were generated in our province of Ontario. When you put this in a per capita rate, it comes to one tonne per person in Ontario. So each of us in the province of Ontario is generating one tonne of waste every year. Currently, only 28% of that waste is being diverted from landfills. The rest goes to the landfills. This results in \$1 billion in valuable resources that are lost every year. We estimated that for every 1,000 tonnes of waste diverted from landfills we could create seven jobs in the province of Ontario with wages of \$360,000, adding more than \$700,000 to our gross domestic product.

This is a major bill that will help to reduce emissions to the environment with our activities in the province of Ontario, so I want to again thank the member for bringing that bill forward.

Our government is committed to moving beyond the regular model of "make, use, dispose of" model. We are now introducing a new model which is basically a circular economy, as it's called: use, recycle and reuse the materials as much as we can. I think this is one step

forward in that direction, so thank you very much to the member.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting the sale of single-use beverage pods, or, as it's otherwise known, the Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act, 2017, standing in the name of the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I've enjoyed working with the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka going back to 2001, when he was first elected in a by-election in March 2001. We were talking about that a minute ago. I think he was perhaps the only Conservative candidate who was elected in a by-election during our tenure of government. For some reason, we had difficulties with by-elections at that time. But he clearly stood out as an outstanding candidate for us in that by-election. He has been here—it's hard to believe—for 16 years.

Of course, he follows in the footsteps of a great man: his father, Frank Miller, who served in government for many years in a variety of cabinet portfolios and ultimately as Premier of the province of Ontario. It is a real privilege to work with Norm Miller and to see the work he does and support it.

I serve as our party's environment critic—I should say as critic to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Certainly our party is very keenly interested in all of the environmental issues that face the province, and we want to see good things done.

This is a good bill that the member has presented. In fact, it builds on a number of other initiatives that he has brought forward into the Legislature in the way of private members' bills over the years with respect to environmental protection and improving our protection of the environment going back to 2004 and 2007—a couple of bills—and 2010, 2011 and 2013. He demonstrates a real interest in environmental protection and, I think, a genuine concern that we need to do more to protect our natural environment, which of course is commendable and I know is supported by his constituents.

I'm privileged to represent, as I said earlier, the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills. We surround the city of Guelph. We have within the city of Guelph the University of Guelph, as you know, Madam Speaker. The University of Guelph played a significant role in the development of these compostable single-use coffee pods. It's a research and innovation success story that we should be very proud of in the province. Certainly in my recent opportunity to tour the University of Guelph and visit the centre where they do the research, I was so impressed—I can't tell you how impressed I was with the cutting-edge, world-leading research that is taking place at the University of Guelph.

In January 2014, Club Coffee, which we talked about earlier, connected with the University of Guelph's Bio-products Discovery and Development Centre and with an industry partner called Competitive Green Technologies

to discuss the development of a compostable coffee pod. We knew at the time that petroleum-based plastics often cost a fraction of what bio-based materials cost, so Club Coffee's cost requirements would need an inexpensive natural fibre to add to the biodegradable plastic.

In May 2014, the BDDC director, Dr. Amar Mohanty, discovered that there is a viable option in terms of coffee chaff, which is a compostable waste product—the coffee bean skin. They decided they would use that as the material. It is removed after roasting coffee beans, and companies often pay to have this chaff waste shipped to landfills. Instead, at the University of Guelph they discovered a new use for it. Using coffee chaff in the creation of this compostable product addresses the potential supply shortage, as nearly 10 million pounds of chaff waste is produced annually.

By September 2014, a compostable ring formulation made of 25% coffee chaff was developed by the BDDC at the University of Guelph. This invention combines the advantage of biodegradable plastics, green chemistry, reactive extrusion and process engineering, along with the integration of an industrial waste product of the coffee roasting industry.

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In March 2015, the University of Guelph's Catalyst Centre filed a patent on Dr. Mohanty's innovation and extensively licensed the technology to Competitive Green Technologies in June 2015. The close working relationship between Dr. Mohanty's research centre and Competitive Green Technologies played a critical role in the commercialization of the formulation. In September 2015, Competitive Green Technologies used a mould that produced 64 rings every 10 seconds, moulding half a million rings per day.

So we see this cutting-edge innovation and research leading to the development of a product that solves an environmental problem. This was all done at the University of Guelph in co-operation with a number of industry partners. I want to commend the University of Guelph researchers as well as all of the partners that came together to develop this technology. As the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka said, this is a world-leading technology that can be exported around the world, and it's going to be a real feather in our cap going forward. I think it's very sensible to suggest that we move forward in this way with this bill.

I would hope that Bill 173 will be passed at second reading today and that it will be sent to a standing committee of the Legislature. I hope and would implore the government not to bury it at committee. Allow the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka to bring it forward at committee so that there can be public hearings, if need be, and interested groups and parties can come in—and there will be some interest, of course—and we can move forward on the bill, not just pass it at second reading and bury it at committee but bring it back after the committee deliberations and have it called for third reading. Let's see if we can get this done, working together.

Madam Speaker, the election has not yet started. As you know, the writ period is some months away. There

are still opportunities for us to work together in this Legislature to get good things done for the people of Ontario. I submit that Bill 173 is one of those good things that we can work together on. I would ask all members of the House to support Bill 173 when it comes to a vote later on this afternoon.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 173 from our colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I'm looking at my order sheet here. It's interesting how certain days take on certain themes. Today seems to be all about managing, mitigating and dealing with a changing environment, and what we can do as elected officials to address those challenges.

I commend the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for coming up with, again, a problem and a solution that seems quite straightforward, which isn't often seen in this Legislature, where we find bills that are convoluted and don't get to the heart of the problem. So I want to commend him for doing that.

I'm a coffee drinker. I don't wake up and drink coffee; I wake up to drink coffee. It's kind of like my internal alarm clock goes off and it says, "Go have a coffee." It's the high-test that gets me going in the morning and it's something that I enjoy, certainly. I guess I've had all different types. I'm prone to using the French press I have in my apartment because it's easy. It gives me two cups of coffee and then it's done; that's it. So I don't have the filters and the pods to deal with. I'm probably not good at that.

But it always struck me as strange to use those Keurig pods or whatever coffee pod company you want. You put them in—I think when I first tried that form of coffee, I'm such a cheapskate, I was trying to get two cups out of one thing, because I couldn't bear to use this thing once and then throw it in the garbage. It seemed like a total waste to me. I tried everything: I put it in twice, brewed it twice to see if it doubled the strength of it—to no avail, Speaker. You've got to use it once, and you throw it out. It's a shame, because it's the life cycle of that product that we question afterwards. Where does it end up?

Speaker, I have the wonderful good fortune of living in Belle River, Ontario, the most beautiful little town in the world. Often, as you walk along the beach, you will find all sorts of things you couldn't imagine you'd find in our waterways. Pens and shotgun shells drive me crazy—seeing those everywhere.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Really?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, shotgun shells float. When I duck-hunt, I pick up all my shotgun shells. I try to recycle them. But you see them floating everywhere. Sometimes they pop out of the gun, but I think it's a good conservationist mentality to maintain your shotgun shells. Pick them up; that's good form.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bad enough that you're shooting the birds.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, that's it.

Unfortunately, we find medical supplies: hypodermic needles and other things. These are things that you look at. I clean the beach and I say, "Is there not a better way?" Could we not find, in this era of technology and advancements in technology, a better way to get rid of this stuff and to have it benefit the earth, benefit the soil?

What the member is doing here, whether he realizes it or not, is playing a role in—and it was mentioned—the circular economy. There's a different thing—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The kids—kids, this is your future. This is what's happening for you, so it's great for you to see what's happening in your community. Thanks to my colleague from Ottawa for intervening and reminding me that this is about the kids. This is about your future and the planet that we leave you as your elected officials.

It was referred to as a circular economy. In the United States, they refer to it also as a circular economy, but a new type of theory that's referred to is regenerative capitalism. It's along the same lines. I think they refer to it like that in the States because they cannot say "socialism." They just cannot get it out of their mouths in the States. So whether the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka realizes it or not, he is embarking on a socialistic type of capitalism that—here's what it does, to my good colleague.

Interjection: He's going to vote against it now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Don't vote against your own bill now that I've pointed that out to you.

We know our capitalist society and our marketplace and the free market as having the environment, which is our planet, fuel the economy, which fuels the masters of the universe in finance down on Bay Street. That's what we know; that's what we think works. But we are now becoming more aware that this is unsustainable and we have to find a different way. So what do you do? You reverse that pyramid. You find a way that the economy, through finance, can finance efforts that fuel the economy that benefit the earth. I think that's what this bill does: It goes a small step to identifying how we can play a role.

For those who want to check out some more theories on regenerative capitalism, I want to give credit to John Fullerton from the United States, who's a director of the Capital Institute. Check it out; check out the videos. It shows a pathway that we can get on board, one that New Democrats have promoted for decades as environmentalists and as those who realize that our capitalistic system doesn't benefit us as a whole. It has to be fixed. It has to change if we are to have a sustainable economy that benefits us as humans and inhabitants of the planet.

Kudos to the member. I'm going to support this bill, and I hope that members of the House will as well.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm just going to check the clock here so it won't happen again.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 173 in the name of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I want to congratulate

him on bringing this bill forward. Actually, I want to congratulate the member from Essex for his commitment to recycling. I have never heard of somebody trying to use a pod twice. Coffee filters—that's pretty good. But it does go to the point—and the member from Parkdale–High Park said that she was a coffee snob; I am too. About 38 years ago, I graduated from Nescafé. I was working for a company called A.E. Price, and we brought in roasted coffee. We were grinding it and filtering it. We didn't use a French press. But ever since then, I have my coffee a certain way: I have no sugar. I don't have a real affinity for K-Cups, but I understand that a lot of people use them. It is kind of mind-boggling that we moved to this—

Hon. Michael Coteau: The Conservatives are the ones who use them.

Mr. John Fraser: No, no. My wife, Linda, buys some for the office. I see boxes in the back of the car all the time, and I go, "Not so much," and then I think, "Where do all those things go?" It's like aluminium pop tins and our packaging.

1500

So the member's efforts to change behaviour I think are really quite critical—very important. It's a good bill. The only thing that I would—when I looked at the bill, it identifies retail. I think there may be a small portion in there that could be institutional as well. I don't know if that's included, but that's very often—you go to hotels, you go to convention centres, you go to those things. That might be something that you want to look at in the bill. I think you're going to capture most of it, but that was a thing that occurred to me when I saw that.

I want to congratulate you on putting this bill forward. As the member from Essex said, we're doing it for the young people who were up there in the gallery, because 30 or 40 years from now, some of us won't be around—which begs me to remind you that on Monday we have the hospice-palliative care caucus in the Death Café, so please come out.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to rise in support of Bill 173, the Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act. I'd like to also commend the hard work of my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The bill would help keep plastic single-use coffee pods out of landfill by requiring that all single-use beverages sold in Ontario be compostable within five years. The need for this legislation is clear because we know that the amount of waste created in Ontario is projected to increase by 40% in 2050. This increase will require the creation of the equivalent of 16 new landfills.

Speaker, landfills are a big deal for me. I remember in my community when the NDP were in power, there was a thing called the Interim Waste Authority created, the dreaded IWA. The IWA was formed by the NDP government to find and build three mega-dumps in and around the GTA. My community in Caledon was one of the areas that was slated for one of these mega-dumps.

As you can imagine, it was not a very popular choice, and it might explain how well the NDP have done in Dufferin–Caledon in the last 20 years. But it does speak to why I am very sensitive about building more landfills and using more landfills.

The problem of Ontario's waste is outlined by the Environmental Commissioner in the 2017 special report called *Beyond the Blue Box*. The report said, "Ontario has a waste problem." She further states that "Ontario has not made significant gains over the past two decades in increasing the percentage of waste recycled and composted."

The issue, specifically, of plastic coffee pods is a growing one. Between 2008 and 2015, the sale of single-serving coffee makers increased by an astounding 600%. I didn't have a chance to find the news report, but I read that coffee purchasing has actually gone down—not because we drink less coffee, but because we're throwing out less coffee. With the single-use pods, we're actually using less coffee and we're not throwing out the stuff we've made. You know, you make a pot for eight and you drink two. This legislation really speaks to that huge increase. In total, Ontarians use 1.5 billion coffee pods each year, and of course, we need to deal with what is left over.

I believe that the best solutions to environmental problems are partnerships, with government, businesses and residents joining together to find innovative solutions. This week, I attended the Pollution Probe Gala, which featured over 400 leaders from all sectors working together for sustainable development. At the event, it was amazing to see all the excellent work being done by businesses and communities to create a sustainable environment.

The winner of the 2017 Pollution Probe Gala was Carbicrete from Montreal. Carbicrete creates carbon-negative concrete. Carbicrete uses industrial waste steel slag instead of cement in their concrete and sequesters CO₂ in the wet concrete to give it strength. This permanently sequesters CO₂ within the construction project, making their product carbon-negative. Carbicrete is the kind of innovation in industry we need to champion and encourage, just like the pods. Trying to support environmentally friendly and recycled products is why I introduced the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. The bill would have encouraged municipalities to use recycled aggregate whenever possible.

The discussion around recyclable and compostable coffee pods and environmental innovation within industry reminds me of a company in Dufferin–Caledon that makes water bottles out of 100%-recycled materials. Ice River Springs is a family-owned company with four plants across Ontario. This is the only beverage company in North America to operate a closed-loop system. It takes used plastic water bottles and transforms those into new bottles. Ice River Springs found an environmental problem—mainly, keeping plastics out of landfills—and found a sustainable solution. This is yet another example of businesses innovating to make their product more environmentally friendly.

While businesses take an innovative approach to reduce environmental impact, the government can take steps to be a willing partner. Consumers are increasingly seeking green options. The Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act is another measure that we can take to take waste out of our landfills, and I'm happy to support it.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to have a chance to respond and to talk to Bill 173 as well, An Act respecting the sale of single-use beverage pods. As you know, I am the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the whole issue of the organic waste strategy for the province of Ontario falls into my mandate letter, as does the implementation of certain parts of the Circular Economy Act. Both those mandate directives from the Premier put this issue straight in my wheelhouse, and I'm delighted to have a chance to speak at length about it today.

But before I do speak, I want to give out a shout-out to my friend Bob Chant, who is here. I use to work for Bob. Bob was in public affairs at Molson's for a number of years while I was working for the Beer Store as a municipal consultant. We were out trying to bring deposit return to LCBO containers, something that was eventually successful. I was delighted and had a very close working relationship with Bob. Then, of course, he moved on to go to Loblaws, where he is senior VP of sustainability. What is kind of interesting with those two companies is that the Beer Store likes to say, "We were green before green was cool." Then he moves to an organization, Loblaws, which has an incredible history of environmental sensitivity and of stewardship—the whole green-label program, which was brought in many, many years ago at Loblaws. I know that Bob is directly involved in Club Coffee. He and I had a chance to meet recently. We had a beer at a very special bar where I have a part-ownership, at the Pilot Tavern. I'm just going to do a little commercial, quickly, Speaker: It's our 30th anniversary on Saturday. You're all welcome to come down and have a beer—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Conflict of interest. Conflict of interest.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. All right. The member needs to withdraw.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, I'm sorry. I withdraw: You're not invited.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): If I hear this again, someone will be warned. It's never too early or too late to be warned.

I return to the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I am sorry. Maybe I should retract the invitation.

What I see—and I had that conversation with Bob at the time—is essentially that Club Coffee is out for the hearts and the minds of the people of Ontario and across Canada and across the world. They have an extraordinari-

ly impressive product—Ontario technology, sustainable—which they brought to the University of Guelph. We've heard some of the stories in the past. I'll give another shout-out to my friend Lee Wells, who is married to Andy Faas, who was a significant investor in Club Coffee back when.

Making the PurPod100—they've had success in a number of jurisdictions. Recently, I think, they just announced in Seattle that they're going to put these coffee pods into the organic bins and they will be collected there. There, they are going into an aerobic composting system, which makes a lot more sense for this, or may make more sense, than the anaerobic systems that many municipalities, like the city of Toronto, are engaged with. The city of Toronto, for instance, has an anaerobic digester that the green bin waste goes into, and they scoop out all the large materials and take them out of the system, so even if it is compostable—I know this because I used to represent a compostable bag company that wanted to use their bags to collect green bin waste because they were compostable. The problem is that they get dragged out of the system and end up in landfills, so they weren't really doing any benefit.

There may be an opportunity—and we're looking into this, Speaker. I know that Club Coffee and the group are working with municipalities like the city of Toronto to see if in fact they can hydropulp as part of the processing to make the pieces small enough so that they can participate in the anaerobic digestive process, and eventually they will fully degrade, once they get into secondary processing, which is done up in Arthur. I'm sure you know the town of Arthur, where Walker Industries is doing secondary composting of anaerobic digestate. That is a way to go. You're trying to capture the hearts and the minds of the people of Ontario with this compostable coffee.

1510

At the same time, other organizations like Keurig coffee—I met with Keurig recently about this bill, particularly. I had the pleasure of meeting Stéphane Glorieux, who is the president of Keurig Canada, a fascinating man and, again, a dedicated environmentalist. He's very passionate about what they're doing. I met him with a consultant that works with him, Amir Remtulla. Many of you here may know Amir. He's a wonderful guy. The irony is, Amir used to work for Bob Chant years ago. He was an assistant with him at Molson. So here's Amir, on one side, representing Keurig, and our friend Bob is here representing Club Coffee. It's a small world and I'm delighted I've had a chance to participate in a bit of that.

I know that Keurig has developed a recyclable pod that is really, fully 100% recyclable. They use a number 5 triangle in the centre. It's a recyclable plastic. It's a polypropylene. What they know is that in the new recycling system for plastic recycling in the province of Ontario, there's a company down in Sarnia—the member for Sarnia knows; we toured it recently—called ReVital. It's a partnership with Emterra recycling. They have

optical sorters that are so quick, so fast, that they can identify small bits of plastic the size of a nickel or a dime and they're doing 10,000 pieces a minute. It's actually extraordinary technology. They are able to take a small piece of recyclable number 5 out and put it into a stream where it can be recycled back into reusable products.

We have recently introduced, at the Environmental Registry, our new food and organic waste policy. It was posted on November 16. Therein, we're looking for a strategy for all organic wastes, of which coffee grounds would be an important source. I know the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about how difficult it would be to recycle. At Keurig, they're pretty confident that people will be able to do that learning so that they can pull off the top, dump the grinds and put them in—whether they're rinsed or not isn't really the issue—and they'll be able to recycle them.

Our focus in the circular economy is keeping things out of landfill, not necessarily dictating the winners and the losers, whether they should be compostable or recycling. We'd like the people to make that decision.

I would propose a small amendment to the member's bill to make it consistent with diversion: that “no person shall sell or offer for sale at retail a single-use beverage pod unless it is fully recyclable and/or compostable.”

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're talking today on the Reducing Waste One Pod at a Time Act, put forward by my colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. It's just so that we should focus on the single-use pods sold in Ontario, to have them compostable within and to start that process to make it law within the next four years.

I want to commend him for doing this because it's something that really bothers me, when I use my Keurig up here at Queen's Park in my office, if I have to throw that little pod in the garbage. So thank you for putting that forward, and thank you, everybody, for all of your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I now return to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to wrap up.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to all of the members who spoke this afternoon to my private member's bill: the member from Parkdale–High Park, who also talked a bit about the municipal concerns and packaging; the Minister of Research and Innovation, who talked about the climate change aspects of this, and it certainly is beneficial in fighting climate change; the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, who took a fair amount of time talking about the Ontario innovation of coming up with the PurPod100 and the fact that the bioresin is made from a waste product, coffee chaff, of which there are 10 million pounds; and the member from Essex who—I didn't realize this was a socialist idea, and I don't think it is, really, but I think this is an idea that's the best solution to a waste problem we have in Ontario. I want to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon—I do believe this is the best solution for the environment for dealing with

those 1.5 billion coffee pods that are ending up in landfills; and, of course, the members from Beaches–East York and Thornhill.

The member from Beaches–East York seemed to want to include recycling. I would simply say that people use these devices because they're convenient. The idea that they're going to take this hot pod and they have to get the foil off and they have to disassemble it—it's just not going to happen. They're going to continue to end up in the waste. That's why I think this is the cleanest solution. It solves the contamination problem.

It's the best solution for the environment. I also think it's the best solution for industry, where you have that certainty. Do you know the rules you're working under? Well, then, that's what you work under. There are other types of compostable designs that are coming out, day by day.

Thank you to everyone. I look forward to your support on this private member's bill, and I appreciate that.

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

ORGANIC PRODUCTS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

SUR LES PRODUITS BIOLOGIQUES

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products / Projet de loi 153, Loi visant à réglementer l'étiquetage et la certification des produits biologiques.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to urge members of this House to support the bill, the Organic Products Act, 2017. Before I go further, I want to thank my co-sponsor, Sylvia Jones, the member for Dufferin–Caledon, and I want to thank the Organic Council of Ontario, whom I first discussed this bill with and who provided invaluable assistance in pulling this all together. Their advice is very much worth listening to.

Speaker, organic food is a growing market in Ontario and across Canada. It reduces the use of pesticides, it gives better results for storing carbon in the soil—and that is a real interest that we need to pay attention to if we're concerned about climate change—and it uses less energy in crop production. All those are good things and it is to our advantage to promote organic agriculture, and I'll be discussing that in some greater detail later. But frankly, in order to grow and protect the organic food sector, people have to have confidence that the food they buy is really organic when they step up and pay that premium for organic foods. When they bring home food that they have greater confidence in, they need to know that it is as it was billed.

That is where this bill comes in, because premium prices are paid in the organic sector, and there's a real incentive to falsely label food "organic" when it isn't. In fact, counterfeit food—organic and non-organic—is a reality in Canada and internationally.

In 2015, Interpol announced that it had conducted an operation between December 2014 and January 2015 that led to the seizure of 2,500 tonnes of counterfeit food, including mozzarella, strawberries, eggs, cooking oil and dried fruit in 47 countries. The purchase of cheap goods, their relabelling or rebranding as high-quality goods and their sale at a premium price is a very lucrative business and one that people have to pay attention to.

In 2016, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced that it had fined a Canadian company called Mucci International Marketing as well as two of its directors a total of \$1.5 million for labelling imported greenhouse peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers as "Product of Canada." The products were sold to a retail establishment over a 15-month period. So it isn't just an attempt on the part of some to use the "organic" label to make extra money; this is a problem in a variety of fields.

Canadian Grocer reported these events earlier this year, and they went on to say, "The majority of Canadians are concerned about food products that are either counterfeit, adulterated or otherwise misrepresented, according to a new study from Dalhousie University.

"The study, Food Fraud and Risk Perception, found 63% of people surveyed are concerned about food fraud—such as non-organic or non-local products labelled as such—while 40% said they have purchased a fraudulently labelled food item.

"Canadians are becoming increasingly aware of food fraud" in this country.

This bill aims to ensure that people get the real deal when they're shopping for organic products.

1520

A few months ago, CBC reported on this bill. They noted that right now in Ontario, any food both produced and sold inside the province can legally be labelled organic without any kind of certification to back up the claim. That that's not the case for foods brought in from other provinces or countries. For those foods, federal rules apply, rules that disallow the use of the term unless the label also contains the name of a certification body.

I'll just note, some representatives from the Organic Council of Ontario are here. I thank them for all of the work that they've done to make this bill a reality.

I'll go back to that article from the CBC. They quoted me, and since I love to be quoted, I'm going to repeat what they printed: "The people who are actually taking on the cost, responsibly and honestly producing organic food, shouldn't be competing with people who are simply able to put a label on their food saying organic without actually putting in the time, effort and money to make it real."

CBC reported that "Karen Cook, who runs Aman Farms just south of Ottawa near Delta, Ontario, is among those who hope MPPs vote in favour." She is a producer.

She “sells organic meats and baked goods at the weekly Ottawa Organic Farmers’ Market, which requires farmers to provide evidence of certification.” Aman Farms goes through certification on a yearly basis and pays about \$2,000 a year to keep its certification. It is submitted to inspections on an annual basis.

She says, “We spend more to provide this food. We want to make sure it’s good quality. We want to make sure that it actually fits the label that’s on it.”

For instance, when it comes to pork, a bag of organic feed for pigs is \$30; a bag of any other kind of feed at the store is just \$15. So right off the bat, her costs of production are much higher than someone else’s, who might say “organic” without actually providing an organic product.

Because she is in a market that checks for certification, she isn’t competing immediately with farmers who make fraudulent claims. But she hears from other organic growers in the Ottawa area that there are people who are engaged in labelling foods as organic when they are not. It puts vendors in a very tough spot.

It’s not a surprise that the Organic Council of Ontario supports the bill. They were really central to writing it in the first place. Their president, Tom Manley, said that Ontario is behind five other provinces that have already moved to close similar loopholes. Ontario could easily join them by applying federal certification rules to the goods sold inside the province.

Frankly, there are people who inadvertently, or because they engage in a variety of good practices but don’t certify, use the term “organic,” and I think they’re doing it on a good-faith basis. Those are people that we hope to bring into the organic labelling and regulation system. There are people who are intentionally defrauding customers, undermining the organic farmers. They, frankly, should not have a free ride any longer.

What this bill does is prohibit the marketing and labelling of products as organic unless they’ve been certified as organic in accordance with the act. It requires the minister assigned to the administration of the act—I’m assuming that it will be the Minister of Agriculture, but I’m sure there will be a big fight in cabinet to see who actually gets responsibility—to create a register of all products that are certified as organic and it requires the minister to regularly update that register.

Canada is the fifth-largest market for organic products globally. With over \$1.4 billion in retail sales of organic products, growing 10% annually, Ontario boasts one of the largest organic markets in Canada. We have a large and growing market. It needs to be protected. It needs to be regulated so that people have confidence in it. This bill gives the designated minister the power to regulate the use of the name “organic,” appoint inspectors and bodies that will confirm that the products are organic, and it gives the minister enforcement mechanisms to prevent cheating and counterfeiting.

I think I’ve established what the bill does. I’ve established why it’s a good thing for consumers to know that what they’re getting is what they expect to be getting.

But I also want to just talk about the value of organic agriculture itself and why it makes sense to protect this sector so that it can grow.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN put out a major report on organic agriculture in 2009 focused on sequestering carbon in the soil—taking that carbon, which would be carbon dioxide in the air, and putting it in the soil so it doesn’t change our climate. Not only did they see good results for carbon sequestration from organic practices—something increasingly important as the world gets hotter and hotter—but they noted a number of other environmental benefits.

I want to quote some of what they had to say: “Organic agriculture has various positive environmental effects, chiefly enhancing biodiversity ... and reducing the energy use for agricultural production.... Emissions from mineral fertilizers production, which contribute alone to 1% of global” manmade “greenhouse gas emissions, are totally omitted.” That’s substantial. “Furthermore, organic agricultural practices show ways of efficient nutrient management, which is going to become even more important in times of limited resources. While agricultural productivity increased substantially during the last decades by using higher amounts of mineral fertilizers,” their effectiveness has been declining. “Organic agricultural practices can contribute to a more efficient use of nitrogen by planting legumes and catch crops and integrated livestock production. Integration of landscape elements and higher soil organic matter contents increase the water-capturing capacity of the agricultural system and lower the risk of soil erosion.” Thus, “the risk of yield losses by extreme weather events is lowered....” As we see more and more extreme weather events, we’re going to want our agricultural systems to be more and more resilient. They go on to say: “Abstinence from all chemical pesticides avoids the risk of health damage by chemicals for farmers and consumers. Water quality is increased both by lower nitrate leaching and abstinence from agro-chemicals....”

This bill provides regulation for a sector that is vulnerable to misrepresentation. It protects a large and growing part of our agricultural industry. It gives consumers certainty when they buy organically labelled products. It supports the growth of an environmentally beneficial practice. Speaker, I hope that all members will join in supporting this bill.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It’s great to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record this afternoon.

First of all, I know that the good folks in Peterborough riding will be tuning in right now to channel 95 on Cogeco in Peterborough. They’re all getting fixated on what is happening here this afternoon, and I want to give a bit of a shout-out to them.

I also want to recognize Yorkshire Valley Farms, headquartered in the great riding of Peterborough. They are a very successful organic chicken producer. The two principals of that business are very close friends of mine:

Tony Ambler, who owns Swish Maintenance in Peterborough—a very successful business guy—and Tom Ahrens, who is the other principal. Just recently, they purchased an organic chicken processing operation in Harriston, Ontario. We believe in Peterborough that when you're headquartered in Peterborough you like to share the wealth around the province of Ontario. They're happy to be working in Harriston.

They produce a wonderful product that you can get in all of the major grocery stores right here in Ontario today. They also export to the United Arab Emirates on a just-in-time basis. The chicken leaves Pearson, and about 12 and a half hours later, it's fresh on a table in the United Arab Emirates. So that's good news about agriculture here in Peterborough.

But I know that my friend from Toronto—Danforth and my friend from Dufferin—Caledon really want to know what the Minister of Agriculture wants to do this afternoon, so I can reassure both of them that the government side will be supporting this bill this afternoon.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I heard thunderous applause, Madam Speaker—a little like when I made my speech to the OFA on Tuesday morning, bright and early, at about 7 a.m.—the very warm welcome that I received from the farm community in the province of Ontario. I want to thank Keith Currie, who was just re-elected as their president.

We know that this is a very important issue in Ontario today. We are partnering with the Organic Council of Ontario to create a Foodland Ontario Organic program logo and to promote Ontario-grown organic foods.

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We have a long history of working together to build a stronger organic food industry in the province of Ontario. As my friend from Timiskaming—Cochrane and my good friend from Haldimand—Norfolk Mr. Toby Barrett know, I've always said publicly that when it comes to agriculture, it is a non-partisan issue. All 107 members in this House have a great interest in the success of agriculture in the province of Ontario. There's \$37 billion to Ontario's GDP, and 800,000 Ontarians are employed in this sector each and every day, and Madam Speaker, the most important aspect of all this is the foundation base of 50,000 family farms.

I think there are a lot of good ideas in this bill, and we'll continue to consult widely, because since 2009, our government has invested more than \$12 million to help the sector scale up and thrive in the province of Ontario. As I said, we created the Foodland Ontario Organic program—very important to us all. Working with the Organic Council of Ontario, our government created the Foodland Ontario Organic program and logo in the wonderful year of 2011. Participating growers must meet Ontario Foodland's definition of local food products, as well as the Canadian organic standards. To ensure the integrity of the Foodland Ontario Organic program, participating growers must provide a copy of their certification on an annual basis—very important to us all.

Speaker, today we are extremely proud to recognize the 52 organic growers participating in our Foodland Ontario Organic program, ensuring quality and integrity are maintained across the thriving agri-food sector. And, Madam Speaker, I know a song that you sing every morning in beautiful Scarborough is that we all remember that good things do grow in Ontario.

In the last five years alone, organic imports, of course—we've been looking at ways to continue to grow these products in the province of Ontario. Over the past 14 years, through the University of Guelph, we have provided \$3 million into 25 organic research projects through our partnership with the University of Guelph as well as other research programs.

I know I want to leave some time, because one of the experts on this side of the House on organic things is my colleague the member from Beaches—East York. I'll conclude so I can give that member some time.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon to speak to Bill 153, the Organic Products Act. I co-sponsored this legislation because I believe it's important that as legislators we address the inconsistency in organic labelling in Ontario.

As we know, in 2009, the Canadian government adopted the Canadian organic standard for products labelled "organic" that are sold across provincial borders, with the Canadian organic logo. But in Ontario, there is no requirement for organic-labelled products to be verified as organic. This means that anyone in Ontario is free to use the term "organic" so long as they do not sell their product across provincial borders or use the Canadian organic logo.

Essentially, the problem is that while consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic products, there's no consumer safeguard to ensure that the product they are buying is actually in line with the high standard of organic production.

We already know that consumer demand for organics is growing. According to recent data from the Canadian Organic Trade Association, two in three Canadians are spending at least some of their weekly grocery budget on organic items. According to the Organic Council of Ontario, the organic market in Ontario is worth \$1.4 billion. I want to thank the organic council—John Saunders is here to listen to the debate—for some of the material that I'm going to be using in my debate.

The key intention of Bill 153 is that we ensure that as the demand for organic food and products grows, consumer confidence in the organic claims of those products is not eroded. Ensuring that consumer confidence in organic products remains high is good for both the consumer and the organic producer because it means that consumers will continue to purchase organic products for years to come.

In its essence, Bill 153 is a consumer protection bill. The combination of a billion-dollar industry in Ontario and the lack of regulation over what can be called

organic is an inconsistency that must be addressed. We already know that other provinces have moved to address this. In six provinces—Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Alberta—they have or are looking at adopting an organic regulation to ensure consumer confidence in organic labelling. All of the provinces have a slightly different system, but it works for their consumers.

Quebec and British Columbia's organic standard was actually in place before the federal government's Canadian organic standard was put in place, so they've had to adapt their program to the introduction of the federal standard, while other provinces, like New Brunswick, have essentially adopted the federal standard.

But Bill 153 has common ground with other provinces in that it proposes to address the inconsistency between the federal regulation of organic labelling and the lack of oversight on the provincial side. The bill would require that nobody market or label their product using the word "organic" unless the product has been certified. Next, it provides regulation-making power to the minister to designate and govern a certification body and/or certification process. It sets up powers of inspection for a complaints-based process of enforcement. Finally, it sets up the establishment of an organic products register to be published on a government of Ontario website, similar to the information-sharing between certification bodies and the government of Manitoba.

That said, a key element of the proposed legislation is an ongoing commitment to work with producers and consumers to make Bill 153 the best made-in-Ontario solution possible. That's why the three general farm organizations—or conventional farm organizations—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the National Farmers Union, Ontario, support Bill 153.

I want to remind people that sometimes when we talk about organics, there's this perception that you are choosing organics over conventional or pitting the two—conventional farming against organic. I know from producers in my community, in talking to producers as we've been working through Bill 153, that that is simply not the case. That's why I'm so pleased that those three major farm organizations understand and appreciate and support the intention of Bill 153.

"The OFA supports a stronger definition to validate any organic claim. We also encourage consultation with farmers, producers and consumers to develop effective strategies for growing the sector to meet increased demand for organic products."

That's why getting Bill 153 past second reading and into committee is so important.

The importance of consultation with producers is critical because we know that certification of organic products is burdensome. It is a reality that many small producers in Ontario have not certified, not because they're engaging in fraud, but because of concerns over cost and paperwork associated with certification. One of the pillars of the legislation that needs to be determined

in consultation with stakeholders during committee is how we ensure that this "made in Ontario" has mechanisms to ensure small producers can more easily certify.

There are a variety of mechanisms that other provinces and jurisdictions have utilized to ensure that small and new producers can be certified. For instance, one can look at the pledge system, where the pledge signers sign an affidavit that they are following certain standards. This system does not necessarily have to include inspection of these smaller producers and is, instead, based on the integrity of the farmer.

In a similar vein, Ontario could look at adopting a peer review system. Under this system, the annual on-farm inspection is conducted by the farmer's peers and would allow annual fees to be kept to a minimum.

These systems are particularly useful because we know from the input of small organic producers that many have not sought certification because they are actually selling to their neighbours and their local community. Since these small-scale farmers know many of their customers by name, consumer trust is high enough that consumers do not need certification to trust the organic claim of the producer.

However, to ensure that all producers play on a level playing field, certification across the industry is key. A made-in-Ontario system can reduce the burden on small-scale local producers while also ensuring that the organic claims in Ontario are not eroded. Getting Bill 153 passed and into committee is the crucial next step so that we can have those key discussions with the industry. That's why I'm pleased that the minister has already initiated consultation with the sector and that there will be a round table with the ministry on November 28 in Guelph.

I'm also glad that the minister has already met with the MPP from Toronto–Danforth and myself to discuss our perspectives on the requirements for effective and thorough consultation—thank you. But even though I'm grateful that the minister has initiated talks with the sector, I hope that after he votes in favour of Bill 153, he will not allow the government to drag their feet getting this bill to committee.

In the end, organics are a somewhat unique product because their value is inherently tied to the realities of how that product was made. That is why ensuring that the organic claims of producers are not fraudulent is so important. Consumer confidence and demand is directly tied to the trust they have in the producers following the standards of organic production.

1540

In the end, the decision the House has to make today is simple: We must agree that the growing organic market needs to have a system that ensures consumer confidence in organic claims, and since the federal government has already addressed this with interprovincial trade, it's time for the province of Ontario to step in and fill the gap.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 153 from the members from Dufferin–

Caledon and Toronto–Danforth. This debate is incredibly important because, finally, we've crossed this tipping point, I think, with people who really have this misnomer about what actually happens on our farms, and there's generally a disconnection from our food products, our agricultural products.

Growing up—I was talking to a mother about this very issue recently, and she said, "You know, our children have this complete disconnection of where their food comes from." That's slowly been changing, right? Food that's in a Styrofoam container in a grocery store came from a farm. Everything that we eat comes from a farm.

The politics around clarity on organic products and the proper designation of those products is very politically timely for all of us, and I'm very happy to hear that the House and the minister are seriously moving forward with this.

If you even saw this summer or in the fall, there was the misinformation that was happening around our farmers' markets on what was local food and what was not local food. People care about these issues. They care deeply. The foodie movement and the local food movement are alive and well. As the critic for economic development, I can tell you that there is so much potential in this province to grow this market. The member from Dufferin–Caledon quoted \$1.4 billion in revenue, economic spinoff, if you will, from the organic food movement. I think that is actually just the beginning, it's just the tipping point, because once we have clarity on what is truly organic and what is not, this is an opportunity for this province to really highlight the good work that's happening across the province.

I have an amazing farmer in my riding, Jenn Pfenning from Pfenning's Organic Farms. She's a friend of mine. I have been to her farm. The sense of pride that she has in the practices that she and her family—because it is a family-run farm. The sense of pride is really commendable—it's inspirational, actually, because as someone who grow up in Parkdale–High Park, my connection to a farm has been very limited throughout my life. Until you actually see somebody pull a carrot right out of the soil and eat it—this is a foreign concept for me as a cityite. I guess that's what they call us.

Politically, the landscape in the province of Ontario—people are very ready for this to happen. As the other speakers have pointed out, the regulation is needed. This is, in some instances, really a consumer protection issue and consumer choice. People are making these choices based on knowing that farm, knowing the practices of that farm. When you look at what the definition around organics is—that "the standards lay out the specifics of organic production, including how livestock must be housed, fed, transported and slaughtered; how specific crops and produce are to be grown, extracted, processed and stored; how pests and diseases are to be treated; which substances, methods and ingredients may not be used; and what environmental factors must be taken into consideration."

If you're following the local food movement from an economic perspective and from environmental perspec-

tive, as the member from Toronto–Danforth mentioned, there is this growing movement of people who truly care about how we deal humanely with the animals that are on our farms and that end up on our plate.

I was in Seattle at a restaurant where the people wanted to know the name of that hen—they wanted to know the name, they wanted to know the conditions. It's part of this whole-food movement, which may seem very extreme, I would agree, in some instances, but it just shows you that people have this inherent connection to food now, because they finally have made a connection between food, nutrition and our health.

Finally, from the environmental perspective, the carbon sequestration practices—you cannot discount that at all. This is very important. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, a farmer himself, will remind us constantly that farmers are the original environmental stewards. They care deeply about the land that they work, and they care deeply about the end results, the products that they deliver.

The other environmental factor that the member from Toronto–Danforth mentioned was the importance of water and preserving this resource, keeping this resource clean. I think water is the new oil, and it will be the new oil, because without water, there is no life. Without water, it doesn't matter how big your house is or how great your job is. If you don't have water, that's it.

This is moving us in the direction, I think, from an environmental perspective, from an economic perspective—which I think is really untapped—to a better place where this province can really hold up our farmers, hold up this practice of having clarity of what is organic and what is not, and then sharing that with the rest of the world. What we grow here in Ontario is truly amazing. I love this, that finally this tipping point has happened, where we have not only an emotional connection with the land but this genuine understanding of how important agriculture is to the province of Ontario.

I'm very pleased to see this motion before us, and I'm very pleased to see the parties working together.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 153, An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products.

I'm delighted to have this opportunity, particularly following after my good friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I used to be his PA, so I had a great opportunity to meet so many of the agricultural stakeholders across the province in all the various sectors, including in the organic sector. I got a better understanding of how organizations like Foodland Ontario are so critically important to the good work that we do, bringing attention to local, quality food products.

We know that the market for organic products is soaring. You know that when a guy like Frank Stronach, who made his fortune in Magna, in auto parts manufacturing—with the advice of my great political mentor Dennis Mills, Frank Stronach now is investing heavily in

organic farming. He's investing so much of his incredible fortune, giving back to the world. Think about the fact that he was making auto parts and cars, and the issues we're having now with air pollution around fossil fuel use that he participated in and enriched himself over for years. Now he's giving back in developing products. And it's not just the organic aspect. It's also the whole aspect of ethical treatment of animals, that he is doing it differently. There is evidence to show and suggest that when you do it differently, you end up with a much better product, a much better-tasting product, and happier animals—until that final day, potentially, but happier animals in the period of time that they live.

There are other organizations we're seeing like Blue Goose foods, who are doing organic and ethical food in chicken, beef and fish, across the province of Ontario—in Canada, in fact; they have beef farms in Alberta and they have processing in BC. It's an important company that is seizing on this new dynamic consumerism where people—we call them “foodies”—want to have this better product.

My mother is not a great fan. I love her dearly. But she's a product of the Depression—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nice lady; she's a very nice lady.

Mr. Arthur Potts: A wonderful woman. She likes to say, “Sure, buy organic. Pay more, and the bugs come for free.” But she's learning. We surprise her, as we make her Sunday dinners with good, fresh, organic products on a regular basis.

In my community of Beaches–East York, you see it. I'm a downtown Toronto guy, and the foodies are there, the restaurants are there, and the movement for local farms and the farmers' markets are there. We have the Carrot Common, something I share with the member from Toronto–Danforth. He has the original Carrot Common on the Danforth, and they're opening another location on Kingston Road, just around the corner from where I live, in this wonderful new facility that the Kingston Road YMCA is building, with great housing above it. We also have Courage Foods, a little boutique store in my neighbourhood which specializes in local food, organic foods and such.

1550

So I'm delighted we have an opportunity, and I commend the member from Dufferin–Caledon and the member from Toronto–Danforth for bringing this forward. I had the pleasure of working with the member from Dufferin–Caledon on another agriculture-related bill, the growing Ontario craft cider bill. Although we didn't actually get that bill through third reading and adopted, I know that the debate we had in this House and the unanimous approval and support of the House contributed to those measures, in part, in the way that we could do them, finally coming to fruition. Now we're seeing the craft cider industry burgeoning, just growing like wildfire. This is what this kind of debate can add, whether it's an adoption of exactly all the regs here.

I have a little concern about being too directional in certification in this province. I know that a lot of people

who practise organic farming don't bother going out and getting the certification because it's a lot of red tape. It can be expensive. Do we really need a whole new agency, a government agency, with a whole bunch more bureaucratic, public employees building it in order to regulate this sector?

I know that Foodland Ontario with the Organic Council of Ontario brought forward an organic certification program and logo. So maybe a lot of what we need to accomplish here can be accomplished with consumer education. We know that anyone who has got that Foodland organic certified logo, which is becoming highly recognized in the marketplace, is following a certain standard level without having to go through the whole regulatory, registrar, certification process. We know that, often, the farmer does have a relationship with the customers through our farmers' markets. It's important that they maintain that the consumer should be asking the tough questions.

We had that experience, as the member for Kitchener Centre, I believe—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Waterloo.

Mr. Arthur Potts:—Kitchener–Waterloo mentioned, about the farmers' markets. We could develop a whole bureaucracy around how to register local farmers at farmers' markets, or we could just better educate—that there could be a label: This guy is reselling; this guy is a farmer. I think consumers, through that whole issue in the media, started to understand it better.

I have a sense that a lot of the work that we could do, some of the material we see here on certification and all of the different standards, could be incorporated into what Foodland Ontario is doing with their own certification process. Because here's something else we have to keep in our minds: Not all organic farmers agree with what it means to be an organic farmer. You could become really specific: that you have to have your sequestering, that you can't use this organic—some organic farmers don't spread intensive farming waste on their fields or biosolids from municipal compost because they don't see it as organic. You're going to have disagreements amongst organic farmers on what qualifies, so if you're too specific, if you have too much specificity in the regulatory regime, then you're cutting all these other people out of it.

A lot of other farmers will tell you that unless you're treating the animals ethically, you can't certify them as organic. Even though all the material they're eating and consuming and everything else, the traditional farming practices—so it isn't as easy as to say you have one organic certification product.

The consumers, the foodies, want to know where the food is coming from. They ask those tough questions. They go to restaurants where they trust that the chef is procuring locally. I think that's a good thing, Speaker.

We'll be supporting this bill. I think it raises the debate, but we need to make some changes.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of my residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to talk about Bill 153, the Organic Products Act. I was raised on a farm in eastern Ontario and I'm aware of the many challenges farmers face. For the most part, farmers are price takers. That means they take whatever price the market is paying. They also have to factor in their input costs and the weather to, hopefully, come out with enough income at the end of the year to cover their costs and maybe have enough money left over for living expenses for their family and themselves. Over the years, conditions in some years allow for very good crops, and other years they are not so lucky.

The organic farmers, by the nature of their business, have additional concerns, as they do not have access to the various chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides that would mitigate some of the destructive conditions that they experience on a regular basis.

I can tell you, Speaker, that many times, it is easy to pick out an organic farm. It's a challenge to control the weeds and ensure that the plants have the required nutrients to allow the crops to grow and thrive. For example, when driving down King's Road in South Glengarry, there are a number of organic farms, and they're very easy to pick out because generally they have significantly more weeds than the other, non-organic crops. It just shows the problems that they have.

Soybeans, as an example, can be a difficult crop to grow at best. Even with the latest and greatest herbicides, sometimes requiring multiple applications, they're still prone to failure. For organic farmers, this problem is much more severe.

The unwanted weeds consume the limited nutrients available to the organic crops, and their existence can make harvesting difficult, slow and expensive. Organic crop yields are generally well behind those of the non-organic crops.

Tom Manley, in my riding, hosts the annual organic crop conference in the spring of each year. It's something I have been able to attend for the last few years. It's interesting to talk to the various farmers on some of the issues. Certainly, standards are key. There are no standards. You're talking about a market where farmers are trying to grab that premium price, and consumers need to know that what they're buying is actually what they're paying for. It's very critical.

We are trying to develop a market that we can sell. Agriculture is a major part of our trade balance in this country. We depend on it for many of the products we buy outside of this country. We need to ensure that this huge organic market is available to everyone who wants to participate, because it is a huge income generator.

Also in my riding, I have Hendrick Seeds, just outside of Inkerman. They produce a premium soybean for the Japanese market. It's interesting: I've had a chance to tour their site. They've been very successful over the years. They produce 100% non-genetically modified and traditionally grown soybeans. They're sorted by colour, by size and by roundness, and the markets pay different

prices, depending on what they're producing. The ones that don't pass those levels, they just dump them into the non-organic market, because, of course, they still have some value at that level.

It is a huge market. They develop products each year and always have a different line coming on, and usually are successful. It just points to what Canadian and Ontario farmers can do.

It's important that we set the standards. It's also important that we set them in a way that's economical and logistically set up, to allow maximum benefits for the different markets. There are different markets around the world, and we want to make sure—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm proud to be able to stand up today and support my colleague Peter Tabuns, the member from Toronto–Danforth, on Bill 153, regarding the production and the certification of organic products.

I have to say, I'm even prouder to be a farmer. I think we need a farmer's voice in this debate, because it's not information alone. In the remarks from the member from Beaches–East York, I heard what I felt was some mis-information.

There are ethical standards. Whatever your production method, you have ethical standards. Occasionally, in some, you have not ethical production standards. Those need to be weeded out, regardless of what type of production methods you use or what type of agriculture you're in.

As for me, and hopefully the rest of my caucus, we believe that when a consumer goes to buy a product, if they want an organic product, they should have confidence in that. That is why you need that certification. That's the crux of this bill.

1600

I'm going to be very upfront: I've never produced an organic product. I believe that you can farm ethically and sustainably and not be wholly in the organic sector; I believe that. But as a consequence, my products should not be labelled as organic. That's as simple as you can make it. I believe that you need a crop rotation. I believe you need livestock to actually make that work. When you have livestock and you rotate your crops, you need an awful lot less fertilizer and an awful lot less chemicals. I used on my dairy farm, when I had dairy, a lot less fertilizer than my neighbours—and very much less chemicals, because when you rotate your crops, you don't need the same amount of chemical protection.

My products were not organic, and as a consequence I couldn't sell them as such. But this isn't an issue regarding education. We need education. You've got all of these terms. I've heard "local," "ethical"—I haven't heard "natural" yet today. We've heard "organic." Those are all good terms, but specifically for "organic," it is a lot more effort in many ways to produce food organically. There's a lot of commitment to grow any type of food and to raise any type of livestock successfully. I firmly believe that if your animals aren't happy—I said it

yesterday when I was talking about the bill. I didn't farm just for the feel good; I wanted to make money, right? If you're going to make a profit on raising animals, they have to be happy, because if you have sad, stressed animals, you know what? Long-term, you're not going to be successful. Just think: If you're sad and stressed yourself, in the longer term you run out of steam and bad things happen. Well, the same things happen with animals.

We toured a greenhouse with the OFA Field Day this summer. It wasn't organic either, but the owner of the greenhouse was talking about how they built their own nursery for the plants. He said, "The reason we did that is because when we move the plants to the greenhouse, the plants are so much happier." I related to that, because that's how farmers think. When we look at a field of soybeans, when we look at a field of corn, I hate to say this, but we kind of bond with them. I'm sure the organic producers bond with them, but so do commercial and natural producers.

But the crux of this bill is that when people purchase, they make the choice to purchase whatever type of food they want to purchase, they can be confident that that is the type of food they're getting. That is the crux of this bill. When this bill goes for further debate—and I hope it goes for further debate—the thing that we have to keep in mind is that we ensure that small producers and others who are organic but haven't taken the time are also part of this solution, that we don't leave people behind that we haven't thought of, or that we have thought of and they're just—that's another crux to this bill. But we have to keep in mind that this isn't about education; this is about confidence in the food that people buy and the food that they feed their families.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, first of all, I want to thank those who stood to address this bill: the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Dufferin–Caledon, the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I have to give special thanks to my co-sponsor, the member from Dufferin–Caledon, who spoke very clearly. I think you set out exactly why this bill is necessary. You did it in a way that people will understand.

I want to thank again my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, who gave me a lot of advice at the start of this whole process. Frankly, if you're not a farmer and you want to get some perspective on how to deal with agriculture in this province, he's a good guy to spend time with.

The Organic Council of Ontario: I'm glad that a number of you were able to be here today. I think that what you're doing in the larger sphere is wonderful. It's spectacular. I'm glad I'm able to work with you on this particular aspect.

You're quite right: If people have confidence in what they're buying, it expands the market. It allows Ontario

producers to produce those goods that we now import from the United States. We can displace imports and make sure that more people are employed on the farm, in food processing and at the retail level.

In my riding—the member from Beaches–East York was right—the Big Carrot has been a pioneering organic store for decades now. I remember when they first opened in what was an old hardware store. We flocked to it—frankly, not just because it was organic, but because the quality of the food was very, very high. It became a sensation on the Danforth and expanded over time, so I'm not surprised to hear that they're going to expand further.

Speaker, this bill could help consumers and the ag sector in this province. It makes sense for us to go forward with it. I hope the government will see fit to take it to committee so that we can have those inputs and make the bill a reality.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time allocated for private members' public business has expired.

FLOOD AVOIDANCE, INSURANCE
AND RECOVERY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA PRÉVENTION
DES INONDATIONS, LES ASSURANCES
ET LA REPRISE APRÈS UNE INONDATION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mr. Natyshak. Mr. Natyshak has moved second reading of Bill 179, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Insurance Act and the Municipal Affairs Act in respect of flood avoidance, insurance and recovery. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear "carried."

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member in terms of the standing committee.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to refer the bill to general government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

REDUCING WASTE ONE POD
AT A TIME ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017
SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS
CAUSÉS PAR LES CAPSULES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting the sale of single-use beverage pods. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear "carried."

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member in terms of the standing committee.

Mr. Norm Miller: The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

ORGANIC PRODUCTS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

SUR LES PRODUITS BIOLOGIQUES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 153, An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear "carried."

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member in terms of the standing committee.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Justice policy committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER, FAIRER ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2017

LOI DE 2017

POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT ET PLUS JUSTE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 177, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs as well as the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 177, the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act. The 2017 fall economic statement confirms that this government is on track to balance the budget this year. Our government has said time and time again that we will be balancing the budget this year and in the years to follow.

A balanced budget means that our government will no longer need to borrow to pay for its operating costs. The result: more money to invest in health care, education and other important public services that matter to the people of Ontario. We know that a strong economy,

together with a balanced budget, is positioning Ontario for long-term fiscal stability.

Continued economic growth is helping to keep the province on track to balance. Unemployment has steadily declined from the recessionary high of 9.6% to 5.6% in October 2017. The benefits of a balanced budget and strengthened economy are giving the government the fiscal flexibility to support the people of Ontario in ways that matter to them.

1610

We know that many people are facing many challenges with rising costs of living and feeling uncertain about their economic future. We want to make sure that everyone in Ontario sees themselves in and benefits from a strong economy. That's why our government is taking further steps to support workers and their families and creating more fairness and opportunities for the hard-working people of Ontario.

The PCs managed to increase public debt by 54% during their time in office. Not only did they increase debt while making massive and unsustainable cuts to services, which created chaos, they claim that they had balanced the budget when in reality they left office with a \$5.6-billion deficit.

During his time in Ottawa, the leader of the PC Party voted in favour of a \$55.6-billion deficit—the largest budget deficit in Canadian history. Then, as an MP, he voted to add \$144 billion to the national debt. Again, on this side of the House, we have stated time and time again that we will be balancing the budget this year and in the years to follow.

Our government is committed to supporting the people of Ontario in ways that matter most to them. A very important and critical aspect of that is our French-language-speaking community. Our government is committed to supporting our French-language learners with quality programming as they develop French-language and cultural skills. Our plan for education is providing historic levels of funding for enhanced French-language programming. French-language school boards are receiving \$1.69 billion in the 2017-18 school year—an increase of 123% since 2003. We will continue with these investments going forward.

French public education is a major pillar in Ontario's publicly funded education system. Our government is taking steps to bring us closer to achieving our vision where all Ontario students have the tools that they require to succeed.

Centre Jules-Léger is one of many French-language schools that serve the 620,000 Franco-Ontarians within the province. Our French public education system is in a state of growth in many parts of the province and, might I add, excellent in education.

Centre Jules-Léger is an invaluable institution to the people of Ottawa, serving more than 400 students and their families in communities across Ontario. I visited CJL on two occasions, meeting with students, teachers, education workers and administration. As the only establishment of its kind in the province, we know just how

uniquely important the centre's education and support services are for francophone families and students in Ontario. It provides unique supports in French for students that may be deaf or of hard of hearing or those with severe learning disabilities.

Through an extensive consultation process, we heard the francophone community express a desire to manage and to operate Centre Jules-Léger, that it should be a centre by francophones for the francophone community. We are listening to those perspectives, and we are acting.

As part of Bill 177 for a stronger, fairer Ontario, our government is introducing new legislation to transfer governance of Centre Jules-Léger to the 12 French-language school boards in Ontario. The proposed legislation would also establish a new centre with an equal number of public and Catholic French-language trustees to operate the schools of CJL. We have engaged with Franco-Ontarian partners, and we are tabling this legislation based on feedback from the French-speaking community.

Our government remains committed to providing all of Ontario's students with the supports that they need to achieve well-being, equity and achievement.

Les étudiants et éducateurs du Centre Jules-Léger sont une partie essentielle du futur de notre province.

I want to say that visiting this site was one of the great experiences that I've had as Minister of Education. I met a young boy who went to CJL, and I was told by his teachers that when he came to the school he was quite shy and virtually unresponsive. But when I met him, he was full of expression and was communicating with me and I was communicating with him. It was really wonderful and very moving to meet this young man and to see the tremendous work of our educators and the impact that it has on his life and his family's life, and the potential that it creates for his future.

I also met another boy who was busy working on a robot. He was building this robot, and it was moving and he was experimenting, and I know that this young man has many more opportunities ahead of him in life. He has unlimited potential, and I could really see that in the growth that he projected.

Madam Speaker, it is great to see our students engaged and passionate about problem-solving and innovation, and to see 21st-century learning in action where students are learning how to apply their learning to real-world situations. As part of Bill 177, moving forward with CJL is a tremendous opportunity for our francophone community here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I really don't know where to start. My goodness, I just got a brown envelope from somebody delivered to my desk, and it says, "Ontario PC Party: A House Divided"—I just got that, but I'll put it back in the brown envelope so I can talk about Bill 177 this afternoon.

I know the good folks of Peterborough riding are tuning in for a second time on Cogeco 95; I took a bit of

a break about half an hour ago, but now they're back, so that's good. I get the opportunity to chat about Bill 177.

I want to start off today—my good friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry just had a hip replacement; he's doing extremely well. Now, I would have thought when he asked a question—he could have asked a question on Bill 177, and the question would have been this, to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: "Minister, I want to thank you for the great service that I got at the Cornwall general hospital. I got through the MRI, I got through the surgery, and I'm feeling really fit." I'm pleased that he's back with us today. He's a good guy from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

The fall economic statement, just from a small business perspective—we did go out. I had the opportunity to meet with many chambers of commerce right across the province of Ontario. I was at the Mississauga Board of Trade. I was in Oakville. Of course, no one in this House should be surprised that I started my consultation with the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and my wonderful friend, President Stuart Harrison, and Sandra Dueck, who is their director of policy, to get a sense about a number of things impacting small business today.

So we brought in a number of measures. First of all, on the macro level, we brought in a small business cut, going from 4.5% to 3.5%, which will assist a number of small businesses right across the province of Ontario.

For those, of course, in the agricultural community, something that, collectively, we worked very hard at—the media didn't pick up on this, but one of the big pieces in that fall economic statement was the \$60 million over two years for edible horticulture. That is the group, Madam Speaker, that are most vulnerable to foreign competition. I'll give you a good example: Charlie Stevens, a very good friend of mine. He has a large apple orchard in Clarington, in Durham region. My friend across the aisle from Durham probably knows Charlie Stevens. He produces one of the finest gala apples in Canada today. But the challenge he has is that they produce gala apples in Chile, they produce Gala apples in Washington state, and I just learned the other day that the largest producer of apples in the world today is China. China also produces a gala apple.

1620

I remember one day very well. Charlie invited me to his farm. We sat down at the kitchen table; he poured me a coffee. We went through his financial statements, and he clearly showed to me the challenges he might have going forward. I said, "Charlie, here's my commitment today. Let's look at your challenges. I want to be a partner with you." We were able to come up with the \$60-million program over two years, and in the not-too-distant future, I will be rolling out the details of that program.

Another one that I know will be widely supported in rural Ontario is the \$40-million downtown revitalization program. One of the things we're clearly seeing is that retail in Canada and throughout the world is becoming more digitized all the time. Loblaws just announced the

other day, Madam Speaker, that you could be in your home in Waterloo; you want to get some great Ontario steaks, some great Ontario apples, some great Ontario cucumbers? You just do that online, and then you get the opportunity to have it delivered or you pick it up. That is the future of retail. We want to make sure, particularly in smaller communities in Ontario, those rural communities, as we help them redevelop their downtown cores—which are very important. They're often the hub of a small community. I think, Madam Speaker, you would be very familiar with downtown Lakefield, Ontario. I know you've been there with your mother and your father on numerous occasions. That is a vibrant downtown. But we could make it better, and we can help them make it into the digital world with the ability to do so.

Thirdly, one of the things I'm sure all members have heard from their chamber of commerce is about the apprenticeship program. We are moving from a system where there was a credit for apprenticeship training to a grant. It is my view, when I've talked to a number of business leaders, that this will be a significant way to allow those apprentices to complete their apprentice training program. We do know—it's no secret—that one of the things we need to do is improve the body of skilled labour in the province of Ontario, particularly in our manufacturing area.

The fall financial statement allowed us to set the course over the next little while. Over the last 31 months, Ontario's unemployment rate has been consistently below the national average. One of the things I know is that as I've been touring Ontario, we've made a robust recovery from the downturn of 2008-09, but it has been an uneven recovery.

For example, not too long ago, with our daughter, Shanae, now going to Laurier University—we're very proud of her. She's in her first year. I was in your neck of the woods exactly a week ago. In fact, I was at the East Side Mario's and, Madam Speaker, there's a scroll in there with your name on it, so I got to see it in the front door. It's pretty important that we recognize a business that has been around for 25 years.

As I was chatting with people in Waterloo—the economy, by all objective standards, is booming in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. But one of the challenges, as I was walking down the main street in Waterloo and chatting with all the folks in Tim Hortons—I don't go to Starbucks, but I go to Tim Hortons. They were telling me is that there's a real demand for skilled labour. My response was, “We're making some substantive changes to the apprenticeship program in the province of Ontario, going from a credit to a grant to make sure that you have those young men and women you need to continue to make your business successful in Kitchener-Waterloo.”

On the same weekend, I was also in Niagara Falls. Our son, Braden, who is on the Trent University fencing team—second year at Trent; very proud of that. He was at Brock University for an Ontario-wide university competition. Again, when I'm in these communities, I like to take that stroll down Main Street and talk to them

about what we could do to provide some assistance. Certainly, there are many aspects of the fall economic statement that will support that.

The other thing that is so important to me is our investment in infrastructure. From 1985 to the fall of 2003, I had the great privilege of being a city councillor in the wonderful city of Peterborough. One of the things that we always would work at was our long-term infrastructure plan. We need, of course, to keep renewing our infrastructure in the province of Ontario. We have a multi-billion-dollar program for infrastructure renewal in the province of Ontario, and everywhere you go these days, you see those great signs. Thank goodness they replaced those Canada Action Plan signs. We got rid of those ones, and now we have the ones that say “Build on.” When you see those signs, it really makes you feel great that we're making those kinds of investments in infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

By the way, it's kind of interesting: In your community, Madam Speaker, in Waterloo, they're testing that new electric train. I saw the infrastructure in place, and the signs that were there that said the government of Ontario is investing in that. They're doing their test again. Look, that's a good thing for Waterloo, the home of BlackBerry and other very innovative products, so it makes sense to do that.

I know, of course, one of the great things that we're really proud of, through the infrastructure fund, is that we'll be building the new Canadian Canoe Museum. We saw fit, on this side of the House, to make a \$9-million investment to the Canadian Canoe Museum.

Madam Speaker, I know you know Peterborough very well. We'll be building it beside the lift lock in Peterborough, one of Canada's national historic artifacts, in many ways, in the riding of Peterborough, built over 100 years ago. We're very, very pleased that we'll be building a brand new Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough.

The other thing is, by making investments in bridges and sewer and water systems, we're really moving from a mentality of disaster management, and we're going to a new paradigm shift of disaster prevention.

We do know, whether you believe in climate change or you don't believe in climate change, there's one thing that's absolutely certain: We're getting volatile weather patterns. Al Gore, the former vice-president, calls these weather patterns “rain bombs,” where you have an intense rain over a very short period of time, which causes flooding.

In my community of Peterborough, we had two 100-year storms in a two-year period, 2002-04. I remember the one in 2004 very well. It was on July 15. Of course, we were able to take advantage of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. Some have said that when the government of Ontario came to the great support of the community of Peterborough, ODRAP was renamed “Ontario does right at Peterborough.” That's how we renamed that program when all of our needs were clearly met by the government of Ontario.

I want to thank then-Premier Dalton McGuinty and the then Minister of Municipal Affairs, a good friend of

mine, the longest-serving mayor in Kingston's history, our good friend John Gerretsen.

These are the kinds of things that we're doing. I certainly want to give a shout-out to the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. We're opening up new beds to address the flu surge.

Madam Speaker, I know you're going to tell me my time is up. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to rise in this House to speak. I can't help but comment on the member opposite talking about my recent hip surgery. He's right: Once you get the attention of the health system in our province, it is a great system, and the doctors do the best they can.

But it is sad that the surgeon who worked on me has to operate now two days a week in the US, because they won't give him the operating room time that is available in Cornwall. The operating rooms sit there with the lights out. And there's a huge waiting list. We've heard the argument that there aren't enough doctors. We have the doctors, but they aren't given the resources or the funding that would allow them to shorten those waiting lists. Last year, my sister had to come to Toronto because of the wait times in Cornwall.

It talks about resources. We've invested in the hospitals, invested in the doctors, but we will not allow them to actually help the patients.

1630

Quickly: We talked about a fall economic statement, but how can you have confidence in an economic statement that doesn't use standard accounting practices in this country? You might ask: Why would a government do that? It sounds like they're trying to mask a deficit that's horrendous; it's at record levels. We have the highest subnational debt in the world, a result of this government's 14 years in power.

They talk about even growth since the recession. I guess "even" is another word for slow growth because we have not seen the return of our manufacturing jobs that left in 2008. It's interesting, as recorded by the president of Chrysler, who said that this government has made Ontario the most expensive place in North America to do business. Just think of that: We're now the most expensive place in North America, thanks to this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This bill is probably one of the more significant pieces of legislation that the government presents because it's tied to a lot of financial pieces in the province. There's both French and English in this bill, and we've got a pretty substantial bill. It's addressing 46 schedules in the Legislature, and of those 46 schedules, the agencies that are affected are 61, so it's a very large bill. What I'm hoping this government doesn't do is limit debate on this bill, because when we're going to examine 46 schedules of Bill 177, we

need to take our due diligence and time to look at each one to make sure it's going to do what it proposes.

It's just like the unanimous consent that this government tried to push this weekend on legislation about the college strike that happened. They wanted unanimous consent and they didn't want us to look at the bill, read the bill and debate the bill. So I hope when we have the opportunity to look at the budget—because I've been looking through it; it's intense.

Schedule 36 is about the Registered Insurance Brokers Act. I was a registered insurance broker before becoming an MPP, and this is something of interest to me. As I was looking through that, I thought: Oh, my goodness, they've put that in a finance bill. How does that affect the registered brokers' association in a financial way? Is the government providing more funds? Are they taking away more funds? What's happening here? But actually, it's about jurisdictional conduct over members: when they're retired, when they're suspended, how RIBO can look after their conduct.

I can't go any further because I'm out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to respond to the debate. We heard from the Minister of Education as well as the Minister of Rural Affairs and small business. This fall economic statement confirms that the government is on track to balance its budget this year and also return to balance in the years coming. This is very important because we heard that the government, through this fall economic statement and early on in the budget, has proposed a whole range of socially progressive policies, and they can only be achieved, be paid for, with a balanced budget. We could not do a lot of stuff that we wanted to do and we planned to do in the past years because we were in deficit.

What does that mean? I heard the opposition—programs like more long-term-care beds for seniors. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said that 5,000 are coming next year and 30,000 in the coming years. OHIP+ is coming next year. That's giving free prescription drugs to anyone under 25, as well as lowering taxes for small businesses.

I heard the members opposite talk about the economy, that it's in a bad state. I would like to hear all members of this House going out and promoting Ontario. It is a destination for foreign investment. Just take a look at these numbers. The unemployment rate has dropped from 9.6% during the recession to 5.9% in October 2017. You look at Ontario's economic growth—GDP forecasted at 2.8% in 2017, and that's up from the 2.3% forecast two years ago.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair. I've got lots to say here this afternoon, but I've only got two minutes to say it.

We've heard this debated a number of times about the fall economic statement. I take issue—a number of

people this side do, I think, from both parties. The Auditor General says that the books aren't balanced; the Financial Accountability Officer also says that.

I had a presentation—my colleagues and I—from the Auditor General. She went through it, chapter and verse, and explained to us, in no uncertain terms, that what the government is actually saying is not true, that it isn't, in fact, balanced. But anyway, we'll leave that for now.

One of the things I would like to see invested in in my riding is—I've talked to the minister many times. We need a heavy-haul corridor there. It's only a few million dollars. We've got local businesses that are willing to put their third up. The feds—we've almost got them to the table. I just need a commitment from the provincial government to do the same thing. This would generate a number of jobs locally. It would contribute to the economy, and it would certainly serve the province of Ontario—its tax coffers and, of course, the employment that it would provide locally.

When people are talking about spending money, that everything is free here, free there—I don't think anything is free because the taxpayers have to pay for it at the end of the day. There is only one taxpayer at the end of the day as well.

Those are a number of concerns that I have. I know one of our colleagues is going to speak here in a few minutes and wrap up a little more extensively what his position is, and what our party's concern is with the fall economic statement.

And so, Madam Speaker, I will relinquish the floor to you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): That ends our time for questions and comments.

I'll return to the Minister of Education, who has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: This is a wide-ranging conversation we are having today. I want to thank all members for adding their voices to the debate, especially my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I focused my remarks on the very important contributions of our French-language-speaking Ontarians—our Franco-Ontarians, and that is where I will wrap up.

Notre gouvernement est fier de vous considérer comme des partenaires—une école gouvernée par et pour les francophones.

The relationship that we have with our French-speaking community is very important, and as Minister of Education, I pay particular attention to that. I know that with the consultations we had done, having the CJL governed by francophones for francophones was a very important part of what we heard during those consultations, and how CJL is a jewel in our province in terms of the work that they are doing for students—students who are deaf or hard of hearing and students with severe learning disabilities.

There is no greater work that we do in this province than our investment in our students. I'm very proud of the record that we have as a government on our invest-

ments in education, and even prouder today as we move forward with this legislation that really focuses on our French-language community and for those most vulnerable students within that community. So I want to say thank you for this opportunity to speak to Bill 177.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join in debate on Bill 177. I do so as the official opposition critic for post-secondary education and the associate critic for education. As a consequence, I will be focusing the majority of my time on schedule 43 of Bill 177, which would establish the Université de l'Ontario français, a French university.

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In October of 1966, when delivering a speech at a university in Berkeley, California, the late former United States Attorney General Robert Kennedy said this: "All of us do not have equal talents, but all of us have an equal opportunity to develop those talents."

Speaker, I share the late Attorney General's sentiment as I believe it is every young person's aspiration to become successful as an adult, and receiving a quality education is an effective route to accomplishing that success.

The proposed revisions in schedule 43, which would create a new French-language university in Ontario, would increase the number of options and opportunities available to students who desire to pursue post-secondary education in French. The proposed university stems from and is the result of the French Language University Planning Board's June 30, 2017, report, spearheaded by Dr. Dyane Adam.

The recommendation made at the outset of that report, Speaker, was that the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development take the necessary steps to establish a French-language university and grant the institution all of the powers and the authorities normally granted to a university. The proposed institution would be structured and governed in a way that is autonomous and operating entirely in French. As outlined in the planning board's report, the university's mission would be to offer a range of university degrees and education in French to promote the linguistic, cultural, economic and social well-being of its students and of Ontario's French-speaking community.

The planning board's report also proposed a focus for the academic programming in the institution. The report suggested that the programming be organized around three major pillars, each relying to varying degrees on collaborations and partnerships with the other post-secondary institutions.

The first pillar would be structured around both undergraduate and graduate programming that would address major social issues, including urban environments, the globalized economy and digital cultures.

The second pillar would comprise the development of programming that is entirely in French, in collaboration with other existing bilingual post-secondary institutions,

with a view to enabling the proposed university to respond to pressing needs in the labour sector that are key to francophone communities: in particular, the law, health, social services and education sectors.

The third and final pillar is to support francophone students enrolled in other post-secondary partner institutions by providing them with new options and opportunities in their post-secondary academic careers to continue improving their French-language skills at the university level.

By virtue of these three pillars, Speaker, governance of the new institution by and for francophones is crucial to ensure success in light of the unique character and distinct nature of the proposed French-language university.

Ontario's francophone community has made very clear their support for a French-language university in Ontario. With over 600,000 francophones living in Ontario, a new post-secondary institution focused on French-language programming will meet the demands of francophone youths and others looking to pursue further academic studies in French.

From north to south, from east to west, francophones in Ontario want to manage themselves and their academic programs, as is already the case for their elementary and secondary school boards and community colleges. That is why the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus supports the establishment of a francophone Ontario university. By establishing a French-language university in the province, we are in effect acting in a more inclusive capacity by facilitating francophone Ontarians to attend a post-secondary institution that better suits the academic pursuits of students and the needs of the francophone community.

I would also emphasize that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus's support for the proposed university is long-standing.

L'ancien député de Simcoe-Nord et l'ancien porte-parole en éducation pour le Parti PC, M. Garfield Dunlop, en 2013, a présenté une déclaration devant l'Assemblée législative. Cette déclaration reflétait l'appui continu du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario visant la création d'une université francophone et demandait au gouvernement d'agir rapidement et sans délais. Maintenant, après quatre ans, nous voyons le gouvernement finalement s'avancer dans ce dossier important. À plusieurs reprises, notre chef, Patrick Brown, a demandé au gouvernement d'agir, et nous sommes heureux que le projet de loi ait finalement été déposé.

In spite of that, the provisions in schedule 43 that would establish the proposed university leave some room for improvement. Here are some important points that should have been included in the bill and are currently omitted:

There are no student or community seats on the implementation committee.

The number of students who will sit as members of the university senate lacks clarity.

The number of diplomas and certificates is currently limited to the faculties of art, science and commerce.

This university should be able to offer a wide degree of programs.

With a growing number of students in French-language schools each year, it is very important that we have a well-planned French-language university as soon as possible so that future post-secondary students can continue to learn.

However, it's unfortunate that the Liberal government decided to package the proposed legislation to establish a French-language university as one of the 46 schedules in the omnibus piece of legislation before us today. Bill 177 establishes, amends or repeals dozens of other pieces of legislation, and its schedule pertaining to the proposed university appears as a footnote.

If the Liberal government truly intended to be responsive to the desires and needs of the francophone communities in Ontario, they should have introduced this schedule as a stand-alone piece of legislation. This would have provided all members of the Legislature with the opportunity to recognize the benefits of the proposed university and to vote in support of this establishment.

Sadly, the Liberal government has relied increasingly on omnibus legislation, particularly as we approach the upcoming election, because they are trying to limit debate time and push through several new acts and amend many others. In fact, my colleague the member from Nipissing wrote and published an open letter on November 22 of this year criticizing the government for its continuing use of omnibus legislation to ram through unrelated pieces of legislation without proper debate and consideration in order to score political points.

This is the same cynical approach the Liberal government has taken with Bill 174, which deals with the sale of cannabis, e-cigarettes and school bus cameras, the latter of which was inexplicably attached to Bill 174.

As I've outlined in my earlier remarks on the proposed creation of the French-language university, some of the provisions in the Bill 177's schedules have the support of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. For example, we support the proposed measures in schedules 2, 30 and 34, which collectively stem from the public inquiry into the Elliot Lake mall collapse. The proposed measures in these schedules—as they should, Speaker—will improve safety across Ontario.

In addition, we support the proposed provisions in schedule 3—which amend the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to provide that a child care provider's own children who are under six years of age are not required to be counted in certain situations—because this provision was originally proposed by the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus.

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Consequently, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has requested that schedules 2, 3, 30 and 34, which we do support, in addition to all other schedules unrelated to the fall economic statement, be removed from Bill 177 and introduced in the Legislature as

separate pieces of legislation, as they deserve to be considered and scrutinized on their own merits.

While I've outlined some schedules in Bill 177 which we do support, there are measures proposed in this bill that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus is concerned about—in particular, schedule 33 of Bill 177, which, as proposed, would amend the Pension Benefits Act. It is left heavily to the discretion of the minister and regulations, the timing of which is unknown and the content uncertain.

Firstly, this schedule contains provisions to reflect changes in terminology related to a new funding framework. For example, certain references to the term “solvency deficiency” throughout the Ontario Pension Benefits Act are proposed to be changed instead to the term “reduced solvency deficiency.”

Additionally, references to the term “surplus” in the unproclaimed sections of the Ontario Pension Benefits Act related to contribution holidays will be changed to “available actuarial surplus.”

Both of these terms will be defined by regulations which have yet to be published.

A new term, “provision for adverse deviations,” will also be added to the Ontario Pension Benefits Act, but is also left to be defined by regulation.

Furthermore, schedule 33 would amend the Ontario Pension Benefits Act to require that the documents that create and support a pension plan shall include a funding policy and governance policy.

Pension plan administrators who have applied for registration before this amendment comes into force must also file a funding policy and a governance policy with the superintendent. But the requirements for these policies are also expected to be left, again, to regulation.

There are also concerns that the provisions in schedule 33 will negatively affect pensioners in Ontario. For example, a number of amendments are proposed in schedule 33 to the Ontario Pension Benefits Act to expand the guarantee of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, including:

- in the case of pension plans with a windup date on or before the amendments come into force, removal of the requirements regarding the age and years of employment or membership that members and former members must meet for their benefits to be guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

- in the case of pension plans with a windup date on or before the amendments come into force, increasing the amount of a pension or pension benefit, including any bridging supplement, guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per month.

Speaker, in a letter to my colleague the member from Nipissing from the president of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, Bob Farmer, he states that the provisions in schedule 33 are a disappointing feature of the proposed amendments included in Bill 177. In that letter, Mr. Farmer says this:

“The increase is helpful to some, of course, but still leaves anyone with a pension of more than \$18,000 per

year exposed to the risk of plan underfunding. In fact, these pensioners will be even worse off than they are today, because plan underfunding will be more common and more harmful due to the reduction in the solvency funding target to 85% from 100%.”

The proposed measures in schedule 33 of the bill would appear to run counter to what the Canadian Federation of Pensioners has heard from members from all sides of this House: that there is a commonly held desire to have both pension security and employer savings at the same time.

In closing, Speaker, while the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus is pleased that schedule 43 in the bill before us today proposes to take a step forward on the creation of a French-language university, we remain concerned about the Liberal government's motivation. Considering the timing of Bill 177, its proximity, once again, to the upcoming 2018 election, and the requisite inclusion of schedule 43, we're concerned that the Liberal government is only looking to score political points with the francophone community.

Furthermore, the continued use of omnibus legislation highly concerns us, as this seemingly standard practice of the government erodes the public trust in our long-established democratic processes here at Queen's Park. How can it be considered fair to utilize omnibus legislation to stifle debate and deny members of the Legislature the due opportunity to scrutinize and improve upon pieces of legislation? This practice, when over-utilized, as it has been over the past several months—and we've seen several instances of this—undermines the principles on which this Legislature is based and was founded.

Speaker, I would like to again quote the late former United States Attorney General Robert Kennedy to underscore this point. On June 21, 1961, in Chicago, Mr. Kennedy said, “Every time we turn our heads the other way when we see the law flouted, when we tolerate what we know to be wrong, when we close our eyes and ears ... because we are too busy or too frightened, when we fail to speak up and speak out, we strike a blow against freedom and decency and justice.”

While Bill 177 progresses through the Legislature, I and the other members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus will not close our eyes and our ears. We will continue to speak up and speak out when the Liberal government's actions are not in the best interests of the constituents we all have the privilege of representing and serving.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the remarks made by my colleague from Whitby.

Speaker, this is an odd budget bill because, really, it's sort of a grab bag that everything has been thrown into. It's a pre-election showcase.

Interestingly, again, my colleague referred to a francophone university. This government has been in power now, what, 14 years? This has been a long-standing demand and dream of the francophone community. I

have a large and growing francophone community in Toronto–Danforth. When you bring something forward like this about six months before an election without the money really being in place—this is more exploratory than anything else—what you’re doing is engaging in pamphleteering rather than actually substantial policy-making that will provide a facility that really should exist in this province.

I have constituents who say to me, “A francophone university would be a wonderful thing. What about a francophone high school in the east end so that our students who are going through elementary school will be able to stay in a French-language environment so they can go on to university?” Speaker, what we are seeing in the east end is an assimilation of that francophone population. When young people leave elementary school, they find that there is very little there for them. They go on to anglophone high schools. They lose their connection to the community and their roots.

I find it extraordinary that this is in here just as a pre-election advertising opportunity and not really as a commitment to francophone education in the way that it’s needed here in Ontario and here in the city of Toronto.

1700

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I have to say that I am aghast at what I heard from the member from the PC caucus. On the one hand, every morning in question period, he and his colleagues will rise and will say, “We need more results on this. We need more results on that. We need you to work faster.” I just heard the member from the NDP talk about how, apparently, we took too long on a particular issue.

At the same time, in the same breath, those opposition parties are saying, “You’re working too quickly. You’re putting too much into this legislation. We could break it all up and stretch it all out over the course of months or even years,” or maybe not get it done at all. That’s effectively what they’re saying. I think the members opposite who are saying, “Break up this bill” need to be clear with the people of Ontario who are watching this debate and say, “When we say we want to break it up, we are saying we want the government to not deliver results as quickly.” That’s effectively what the opposition is arguing for.

I can’t support that, Speaker. I can’t support it because I was elected here to get results. Each of the items in this bill is about delivering results for the people of Ontario. The only reason the members opposite keep calling it things like “electioneering” or “pandering” is because that’s the best criticism of these policies that they can come up with. It’s like the member opposite who’s the finance critic, whose best criticism of our fiscal plan is that he doesn’t like our accounting standards. That just shows how lost those two opposition parties are.

This is a plan that is designed to help the people of Ontario. We’re working efficiently. We’re working quickly. We’re working in collaboration. Some things do

take a little bit of time, so that we can consult and bring the right people together to get the right solutions, but that’s what we’re doing.

We are bringing the right solutions to the people across Ontario in an efficient way, and I am not going to support the opposition parties slowing this down. Let’s get these results. The people of Ontario have asked for it. The people of Ontario deserve it. The people of Ontario are going to get these results.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We’re speaking on Bill 177, the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act. It’s really like a hodge-podge. It’s kind of like a stew, and they threw everything under the sun that they wanted to pass into this bill.

I’m the PC critic for children, youth and families. We raised to the government that it was a problem that children under six were counted in terms of the cap on the number of children allowed in a home daycare. They didn’t listen to us for how many years now that we’ve been talking about that, and now we see that’s going to be amended in this omnibus bill.

Also, we said there were problems with the new bill for child welfare. Lo and behold, there’s a correction for that bill within this omnibus bill. There is something about establishing a francophone university, which this government has had close to 15 years to work on. That’s in this bill.

They’re forcing Ottawa to pass a bilingual services bylaw. I’m the francophone representative for the PC caucus. That’s in this bill.

The Canadian Federation of Pensioners is disappointed with the \$1,500 cap per month on coverage for pensions. They’re very concerned that their membership—anybody who has a pension over \$18,000 a year could be in trouble because of this.

To have a bill affecting just about every critic portfolio and ministry in this House is problematic, because it doesn’t give us the chance to debate properly. It doesn’t give us the chance to have the right speakers come and speak on the bill, because it affects all of us, and we can’t all speak on every bill, as we know, especially when we’re hearing of government shutting down debate constantly.

It’s concerning. Thank you for the chance to speak, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from Whitby–Oshawa and even more intently to the response from the member from Etobicoke Centre. Work as quickly as possible? I had an hour to speak on this bill and I couldn’t get it all in.

One of the issues, in response to the Minister of Finance, is how quickly they’re working. Long-term-care beds: They promised 5,000 by 2022, wasn’t it? But we’ve got a 32,000-bed wait-list, and they’re going to make 30,000 more over the next 10 years. I believe that’s a repeat of a promise from a few years ago.

This government seems to be in a hurry to talk about things, but about the things that really matter to people, there's an issue. I know I'm the finance critic, but I'm from the country, and specifically of concern is—for those aging long-term-care facilities in rural Ontario that are going to be renovated or need to be rebuilt, a very big concern is that the private long-term-care operators are going to want to put them into bigger sites to be more efficient. That means, in a home like Northland Lodge in Englehart—it's a D home, and the community is doing everything they can to make sure that home is rebuilt but stays in the community. I think it has 46 beds. That's not the optimum number. You have to have groups of 64, I believe. The government is obviously not working on that because they're making the same promise that they did—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I'll return to the member from Whitby–Oshawa to wrap up.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Toronto–Danforth, Thornhill and Etobicoke Centre.

Speaker, cutting through it all—Bill 177 is 168 pages long with 46 schedules. The Premier and her Minister of Finance would do well to follow the lead of her federal counterparts who have changed the parliamentary standing orders to prevent the use of omnibus bills that include a wide range of unrelated matters. That's exactly what we have in Bill 177. In fact, earlier this month, the Liberal Speaker of the House of Commons ruled that four aspects of the federal budget, Bill C-63, were not part of the budget and needed to be introduced as separate bills.

In my earlier remarks, I requested that schedules of Bill 177 as well as all other non-fall economic statement schedules be removed and introduced in the Legislature as separate pieces of legislation. They deserve to be considered on their own merit. That is a tradition within this Legislature.

As a caucus, we cannot support the financial direction of a government that has allowed debt to spiral out of control in the amount, and beyond, of \$300 billion. It is our duty to represent our constituents and speak specifically to all aspects of the legislation that would have a significant impact on their families and on how their families pursue their day-to-day life. We intend to do that in a robust, full way.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have a new appreciation for your job over there. I did the first rotation, and it's not an easy place to be, especially when someone is talking right at you and saying some outrageous things and you want to heckle them back. I think I would have broken the tradition of this respectful place if I had done that. So I have a new appreciation for the role of the Speaker, for sure.

As always, it's a pleasure to stand up and to bring the voices of the people of Kitchener–Waterloo, who I

represent, to this place. I can tell you with great authority and honesty that they have concerns about this bill. They have great concerns about this government, as well. I think the process here is problematic. It's problematic for the opposition parties, but it has been made intentionally problematic by the government of the day. Bill 177 is a budget measures act. It should be dealing primarily with budgetary items; however, it is not.

Interesting for us is that almost half of the 46 schedules have almost nothing to do with the province's financial systems. This is clearly Liberals being Liberals and bringing forward a piece of legislation which—it has some good things in it; I want to be really clear about that, as I think the PC speakers also have been—has some schedules that are completely not supportable.

1710

I go back, always, to the tone of this government when they were first elected, when the Premier of the day said that she was going to rule from the activist centre, and that she was going to reach across the aisles and build consensus, and that things would be open and transparent here. Unfortunately, that is not true. That has not been the experience that I, as a member, have experienced here in the last three and a half years. And we are some 200 days from an election, but who's counting? I think that's going to change the tenor and the tone of the next six months. We've already seen it happening in this House.

Bill 177 is a bill that is supposed to accompany the fall economic statement. Unsurprisingly, most of what is contained in the bill has nothing to do with the fall economic statement and everything to do with this Liberal government really being very disrespectful to due process. When I think about what happens here in this Ontario Legislature, process matters because process is meant to be an inclusive experience for the people that we represent. It's a core value of our democracy. When that is bypassed, essentially the government is being disrespectful to the people that we serve.

We disagree, obviously, with the Liberals' budgetary policy and we will be opposing the bill, which is most unfortunate, Madam Speaker. The bill is simply too big. It includes pieces of legislation that have absolutely nothing to do with budgetary policy. How does a piece of legislation that establishes a French-language university relate to budgetary spending? It gives the government the ability to do this, but as has already been pointed out by other speakers, the finances are clearly not there. Or, more egregious for us, I would say—or for me, personally—is the piece of legislation that establishes a remediation fund for the Grassy Narrows First Nation but doesn't set out the whole process that would ensure that this community actually sees justice. I think that this piece of legislation is meant to wedge the political parties on particular issues. I ask the government honestly: How is that acceptable? How is that a good way to create legislation?

The bill talks about building a fair Ontario, yet this bill doesn't give the people of Grassy Narrows or the franco-Ontarians the time they deserve to have the debate about

this legislation, and that is also an important piece. So let's go through some of the topics that fall under this budget bill and have nothing to do with the Ministry of Finance. It has the Building Code Act; the Child Care and Early Years Act; the Child, Youth and Family Services Act; the City of Ottawa Act; the City of Toronto Act; the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act; the Education Act; the Election Finances Act—I'll get to that; the Family Law Act; the Green Energy Act; the High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes Act; and the Indigenous Institutes Act. It goes from liquor to tobacco and then back to professional engineers. It is really all over the place, Madam Speaker, and I didn't go through the entire list because it's too long.

If I go back to the process, the federal Liberals actually went through this, and as the Speaker of this—and it's always good to see Madam Speaker here on a Thursday. But the federal Liberals went through a serious debate on this in the summer because they, ironically, were getting lots of pushback on the omnibus legislation that they were bringing forward, and of course they had critiqued the Harper government extensively about doing the same thing. So they brought forward some changes. I think they were forced to recognize that they were on the record as challenging this practice, and then in turn they brought forward some issues.

On the omnibus legislation, the federal Speaker would also be empowered to allow for separate votes and studies for bills “where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked.” Budget bills that implement measures outlined in the federal budget would still be permitted. In addition, prorogation and omnibus bills, two issues that became points of controversy in recent years, would also be changed. To their credit, the federal Liberal Speaker—this is from November 8, 2017, so earlier this month: “Speaker Geoff Regan made a bit of parliamentary history on Wednesday afternoon, ruling that the Liberal government's current budget bill was an example of omnibus legislation that should be split up for separate votes.”

Isn't that amazing? History happened at the federal level, and we're debating this very problem today. It has to be a little bit of fate.

“Regan's move was the first use of a new rule for omnibus legislation—a rule that the Liberals introduced this spring after complaining about their predecessor's use of budget bills.” This is what this provincial Liberal government is doing, though.

“It is also something of a watershed moment,” this article goes on, “for the long-simmering concern about such complex legislation.

“The new rule empowers the Speaker to allow for separate votes on a bill's measures ‘where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked’”—as in the so-called Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act. This is exactly what we are looking at right now.

Wouldn't you love to have the power to pull out the Grassy Narrows piece of this act and say, “Okay, let's

make sure that we accelerate this, that we get this done and that we do it right”? What power that would be for the Speaker. I would welcome that power for you, Madam Speaker—if you pulled out the Franco-Ontarian, if you dealt with the Grassy Narrows and we actually got to do our jobs as legislators to make sure that, on a go-forward position, the legislation actually did what it said it was going to do.

“That rule specifically exempts the twice-annual bills that implement measures from the budget....

“As a result, Regan said he was within his purview to put four parts of the bill to separate votes,” which is exactly what I believe we have wanted. It would put you in a very uncomfortable position, obviously. The Speaker is supposed to be neutral, but of course, you have some allegiance because you come from a political party.

Then they actually did it. They actually broke the budget bill into five separate votes, and in a very responsible manner, which is not happening here today.

The federal Speaker, who happens also to be a Liberal, says that it was in the interests of democracy. Imagine that: It is in the interests of democracy, Madam Speaker, to actually address the schedules and the respective acts that are found within the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act economic outlook and fiscal review, to separate them and deal with them responsibly. That is, obviously, what we would like to see.

I have to tell you, I do miss a little bit being the finance critic, but just a little bit because it's a lot of work. I'm really happy for the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. But a briefing on a piece of legislation like this—how many people were there? There were 60 staffers in there. It was the biggest briefing ever, because they had never seen this pail of legislation in front of them before. Then, of course, you have to have the expertise. Remember, these are all very good people who care deeply about the public service, and they are stuck in this room going through this mess of a bill. I am being kind when I say that, Madam Speaker.

Schedule 40, the Taxation Act: I'm drawing attention to this because it enacts the Caregiver Tax Credit that was spoken about in the 2017 budget, as well as the new tax credit for apprenticeship programs. The apprenticeship program was mentioned by the Minister of Agriculture when I was sitting in your chair and he was specifically saying that this is a really good thing.

Remember, though, the Caregiver Tax Credit harmonizes the credit received by people who live in the home of the person they are providing with care. You also have to remember that these people have so few options in the province of Ontario. The informal familial care happening across this province is happening out of necessity, out of desperation, out of crisis. What we found out during the briefing is that this had already been talked about by the Liberal government as this revolutionary new support, but we learned at the technical briefing that, for the most part, it's just a harmonization of the two existing tax credits. There is a slight increase in funding for individuals who live outside of the home of the person they're providing care to, but it is negligible.

There is still no long-term plan for home care and for home care support. Really, the personal support workers in the province of Ontario have had it. They have reached that point of crisis. You still have, really, family, friends and neighbours coming in. It is neo-liberalism at its worst. There is no plan to help these people either live with dignity in their own homes or get on a wait-list of 23,000 people for long-term care.

1720

The minister mentioned the apprenticeship piece. My son has just started out on that journey. He's up in Orillia. He's launched. He did his one year at Conestoga, the pre-apprenticeship program, and then he got this apprenticeship position and was accepted at the Shock Doctors up in Orillia. He's rooming and boarding and working, and I am happy. I'm happy that he has launched; I'm happy because he's doing something that he's happy with.

But you must remember that in 2015, the Auditor General identified this apprenticeship tax credit as very problematic, because there were a lot of people who were accepting apprentices but they weren't honouring the true transfer of knowledge within that context. They were getting their tax credit, but they actually weren't doing the work.

This is not the case for my son. He is getting 60 hours a week, and if he continues at this pace, he'll get his electrician's ticket in four years and save me about \$75,000 by not taking that business degree at another university. I'm happy that he's doing something that he loves.

The government must acknowledge that there was a lack of accountability with the apprenticeship tax credit. It wasn't being monitored, and unfortunately, there were people who were manipulating that tax credit and not honouring the transfer of knowledge through an apprenticeship program. We're going to be watching this carefully, and I hope that the Auditor General is also, because this is a response to the 2015 Auditor General's report.

We've got schedule 2, the Building Code Act. We've got schedule 34, the Professional Engineers Act, providing PEO, whom I do a lot of work with, with the ability to create regulations for the purposes of continuing education programs for engineers.

What we need in the province of Ontario are engineers who actually are working at Infrastructure Ontario and actually working at Metrolinx and actually working with our indigenous communities to get clean drinking water on our reservations.

I have to tell you that it is shocking to see this government walk back, away from the expertise that professional engineers bring to infrastructure investment and to the education programs that we all care about.

Schedule 3 is, essentially, the Child Care and Early Years Act. It amends a mistake in the original act. It's found in a budgetary bill.

Schedule 5, the City of Ottawa Act, recognizes the city of Ottawa as having two official languages. That's in the bill. Why is it in the budget bill?

There's an Education Act establishing a consortium of French-language school boards to oversee a demonstration school. Why is this in the budget bill?

There's the Election Finances Act. That's time I'll never get back in my life, I tell you, that couple of summers ago when we travelled around the province in response to the findings that there had been some crossover, a potential conflict of interest, where energy policy was essentially being bought through campaign donations, and the government responded by—really, the pendulum swung very far the other way. Now we have changing the timelines for when a contestant can raise money during a nomination contest. You have to wonder why this is also in the budget bill.

Schedule 14 goes back to the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Funding Act. It establishes this \$85-million trust to address mercury contamination in northern Ontario. Obviously, this is long overdue. The NDP has been calling for action on this mercury contamination for years. Finally, the government has responded.

But they responded in a budget bill, Madam Speaker. Legislation as important as this deserves time to be debated. We have to make sure that it is done right, because they have waited so long for justice. It is interesting that indigenous populations are finally getting the attention and the respect and the due process, but it has been so long in coming.

I have to tell you that just this week, our federal member, Romeo Saganash, brought forward his private member's bill, which would fully implement the United Nations indigenous rights declaration. You have to remember that federal governments have been fighting this for years. We actually have a federal government that is still fighting Jordan's Principle. Cindy Blackstock has been a strong advocate on this. Really, the principle of Jordan's Principle is that children on reserves have access to health care. How could you fight that? Even when the federal courts have ruled that the federal government must comply—and they're still in court. Even though this is an NDP private member's bill at the federal level to fully implement UNDRIP, the government has said that they're going to support this private member's bill. They could do it right now, without the private member's bill, but they're going to wait for the NDP to come forward with the PMB.

We've got schedule 19: high-occupancy toll lanes. This bill is tucked into this legislation, yet the timeline for rolling out those toll lanes is 2021. When asked about the details of toll lanes, the province's ministry officials said that they were still exploring all of their options. So this part is a work in motion.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, schedule 45, says that a worker is entitled to benefits under the insurance plan as if the mental stress were a personal injury by accident. It sets out the transitional rules regarding mental health stress benefits. This is a great step forward for workers, but why is it in an omnibus bill? The WSIB and its entire infrastructure and its entire

organization for many years now has been very focused on reducing its liability and not so focused on ensuring that the workers who are injured in the workplace receive the attention that they need.

It's true that the Canadian legislative process has become cumbersome, slow and unproductive, but mammoth omnibus bills pretending to be implementing the budget only exacerbate the problem. From our perspective, this government has essentially doubled down on this practice—200 days outside of an election. It's an egregious abuse of power. I feel strongly about that. As someone who takes their seat in this House every day—there is no single policy decision that ties together these 46 schedules.

I would love to have seen you, as the Speaker—as the federal Speaker also has the right—pull out parts and divide it so that we can do our own due diligence as members of provincial Parliament and as legislators who bring the concerns of our community to this place.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

As I was aghast earlier, I'm aghast once again, Madam Speaker. The member opposite had 20 minutes, and she spoke about how we should break up this bill into different pieces of legislation because we need more time to debate each component. Then she spent—and I watched the clock—10 minutes of her 20 minutes, so half of her time, talking about process instead of actually talking about the legislation that she said we needed more time to talk about. She wanted to talk about process instead of talking about results. I came here today to this Legislature to debate—frankly, I ran for office to get results. So I'm going to focus on getting results, and I would urge the opposition members to do the same.

What I will say is that the fact that the opposition parties are spending so much of their time—and the PC finance critic did exactly the same thing yesterday—debating process instead of debating the pieces of legislation shows to me a few things: (1) their desire to break up the bill so they can debate the components of the bill—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: —shows that their desire to debate those pieces of legislation isn't genuine; it's disingenuous, and (2) shows that they have very few thoughts on the content of the bill. They have no vision. They're lost—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Do you know what's in schedule 21?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for London–Fanshawe: It's never too late to warn anybody.

I will return to the member for Etobicoke Centre. If I hear any more from this side, someone will be warned. The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Madam Speaker—and that heckling just shows that they know that I'm right.

That's when they heckle me, when they realize—when they're insecure about what they've just done.

1730

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that if they're serious about debating legislation, they should get up and debate the contents of the bill. This is about getting results for the people of Ontario, and breaking up the bill just slows it down. The member opposite wanted to break out Grassy Narrows and the francophone component. What she's saying is, she wants to delay these important pieces of this bill.

Let's not delay. Let's get it done. Let's get results for the people of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I listened very intently to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and what I heard is somebody who feels very much like I feel, that there are consequences when things aren't followed properly. There's a reason why there's procedures here. There's a reason why there's protocol. It's because people who have had a lot of experience in the past have reasoned out that when we are debating items that are completely unrelated in one omnibus bill, problems arise.

We see that this bill itself is trying to fix some of the problems that arose in other huge pieces of legislation that the government put forward, including their update to the child welfare legislation. The government put forward something like 300 amendments to their own bill, which said to us that perhaps you didn't get it right, that perhaps we need to start over again and redraft this, because it was as though we were writing the bill in committee. Sure enough, there were consequences, and we see one of those consequences in this omnibus bill, where they are trying to fix one of the mistakes. I believe it's in section 98: They had to make a correction that when they're reporting an assessment, it will be admissible in a proceeding brought on behalf of a child for recovery because of abuse. This is what happens when you just lump everything all together.

It's very easy for the member from Etobicoke Centre to say that we should just stand here and debate each of these issues, but as we already heard, it is impossible because we have different areas that we want to focus on. To get up and talk about things, you almost lose your mind because you're talking about things that are so completely unrelated—the cap on pensions, establishing a francophone university and changes to the child welfare bill. It doesn't really work.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to be in the House when the member from Kitchener–Waterloo debates the legislation. The member from Etobicoke Centre—it should behoove him to listen to what she has to say because this is part of the reason we are where we are today. This government wants to ram legislation through. They don't want to hear suggestions from the opposition about ways to improve the bill. In

committee, they don't listen to amendments that will actually make things better under legislation, and that's the problem.

I'll give him an example. I'd love to hear him talk about schedules 21 and 36, which have to do with insurance. So far, all he does is tell us about how we don't know what we're doing here and why aren't we happy with this bill. Please, speak to schedules 21 and 36. I'd like to know what you know about it so we can have a debate on that subject. Because under schedule 21, there's very little description here, but when you actually turn to a full schedule piece, it's allowing authority to make these rules. Do you know how many rules the authority is going to actually change? We're talking—let's see here—71 items that the authority, under the Insurance Act, is going to be able to change. So we do need fulsome debate.

Time-allocating bill after bill, expecting unanimous consent on bills without reading them, without having proper intelligent conversation and debate, is offensive to us as MPPs. We were elected here to bring the opinions and voices of our constituents, not to push through results and speed them up so you can look good.

That's why we're here today. We're here to talk about this budget bill. And thank you to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for pointing out intelligent debate about this bill, not making it a personal thing or pointing fingers—how we have to rush debate through to get results. We don't have to rush anything. We need thoughtful debate that's actually going to work for the people of Ontario and make it a fairer Ontario.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaking of thoughtful debate, I have the pleasure of being able to comment on the 20 minutes from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

I want to pick up where the member from Etobicoke Centre was—a little different tack. You'll notice that this morning in question period there were no questions for the Minister of Finance on this bill. There were no questions to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on the \$85-million First Nations piece to clean up the mercury poisoning. The questions are repeatedly the same mindless—sorry, I take that back—the same questions over and over again to the Minister of Health, the same questions over and over again to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and no questions related—it suggests to me that you must be really happy with this bill for the most part. You're only talking about the process issues. There's so much good in this bill.

I will go to this piece about the \$85 million that we're putting aside for Grassy Narrows. This is a historic investment whose time is way overdue. Starting with the opposition when they were government, and with your government over in the third party, successive governments ignored this problem. We've seized on it, and we're putting \$85 million into a special trust outside of government, so that no matter what happens in June, it's

still going to be there, with representation from First Nations, who will have a majority on the committee, to use the best science, to use the best technology in order to clean up the Wabigoon River system. I'm so proud of the fact that our government is doing it.

Yes, it has to be in this bill now, because there isn't the time, because we have been a very activist government, doing a tremendous amount of work cleaning up the messes that have been left behind. We are modernizing and there's renewal. So yes, I'm not going to apologize for the fact that we're doing a lot of work—and good work—to benefit the people of Ontario, particularly the good work we're doing in Grassy Narrows to benefit First Nations.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thursday debates are—I haven't been here for a while. It's fun, right?

The member from Beaches–East York says, "We've seized on this Grassy Narrows issue." It took them 14 years to put it in an omnibus piece of legislation. At that pace, we're all in trouble.

The member from Etobicoke Centre: For him to say that he's aghast at the fact that I am bringing the voices of the people of Kitchener–Waterloo—and they are not buying what you are selling; I'm telling you right now. You know what else? It takes some gall—it does—to have a section of the bill say that Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is delivering the single-largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history, when they have gone up by 300%. The voters, the citizens, the stakeholders—they are aghast at this kind of arrogance.

Quite honestly, I will finish with the process, because process does matter and language in this place does matter. When the federal government was looking at how they could actually be a better government—which this provincial Liberal government is not interested in, obviously—they commented on Stephen Harper, who was a fan of omnibus bills. Mike Spratt, a criminal lawyer, said, "That demonstrates either insanity or crass politicking. I don't know which is worse." The federal House of Commons has said that pieces of legislation that are bundled in a single bill need to be connected by "one basic principle or purpose which ties together all the proposed enactments and thereby renders the bill intelligible for parliamentary purposes," so that we make better laws. This does not make better laws for the people of this province. That is a shameful state of affairs, and it's fully on the shoulders of the Liberal government.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's great to be here today. It's great to be on this side of the House, where we're talking about a balanced budget, a fall economic statement, Bill 177, that really looks at our province and where we are today, gives a bit of a snapshot of where we are fiscally, but also has the ability to move forward on initiatives that we've been working on.

I'm so proud to be part of a government that has lowered hydro costs by, on average, 25%, and that is

giving free prescription medicine to anyone under 25. When we talk about tuition, over 200,000 young people in this province—and older people, students in general—are taking advantage of free tuition, affordable housing, quality child care and senior transit tax credits that are being put forward. The one piece that makes me so proud to be a Liberal is the minimum wage changes that we've done.

1740

I think about the Conservatives and the position they took on the minimum wage yesterday. You know what? I was sad to see them not stand up for the people of Ontario. There's a fiscally conservative myth that exists out there where people believe that when times are rough, you need to go to the Conservatives because they're going to be the ones who are going to get things in order. I just want to remind members in the Legislature here that it was the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada that ran the largest deficit in the history of this country.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Wasn't Patrick Brown in that government?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The Leader of the Opposition was part of that history-making.

There's a myth out there that the Conservatives are the people you go to when things are not going well. Well, they end up cutting things, because we know that at the end of the day austerity measures are always put in place. They start attacking workers, they take away jobs, and at the end of the day they gut the system and the debt goes up. That's the formula that the Conservative government always uses. If you look throughout history in the 20th century, if you look at any major Conservative government and do the numbers, you'll start to see the difference between a progressive government and a Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of that party opposite, the leader of the official opposition of Ontario, when he was in Ottawa under the Stephen Harper government, ran a deficit of \$55.6 billion. During his time as an MP, he voted to add \$144 billion to the national debt. That's larger than our budget in Ontario, and we represent 40% of the economy and the people of this country. To me, it's—

Mr. Jim McDonell: That's not as much as you have.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I already indicated that when I stood up the next time, someone would be warned, so the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry will now be warned.

I return to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. It's hard to speak sometimes in this Legislature with the opposition members heckling so much.

I just wanted to let people know that I will be sharing my time with the member from Trinity-Spadina and the minister for seniors. I'm going to speak for another minute.

Being part of a government that actually looks at the current state of affairs in the province of Ontario—and we're not locked into fiscal doctrine or ideology like the NDP or the Conservatives—I saw the Conservatives vote against a minimum wage that would give people the ability to work hard and pay their bills. I think it's a shame that the members opposite could stand here in this Legislature knowing that what people are being paid today is below the poverty line and actually vote in good conscience to not raise the minimum wage, when we know the gap between rich and poor is growing in this province. I think they should be ashamed of themselves for not supporting the people of Ontario.

They said, "Oh, it's too fast. It's too aggressive." Well, when they were in power, Madam Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party froze the minimum wage at just over \$6 for eight years—didn't touch it once. Can you imagine being a resident of this city, of this province, in 2003 and making just over \$6 an hour? To me that's shameful. You know what? People are going to pay the price in the election. People in Ontario know exactly what this party's up to, and they see past the illusion that is being created that fiscal conservatives are the ones who are here to save the day and they are the ones who can get things back in order. At the end of the day, we lose workers' rights. It negatively affects our economy. We end up paying more in regards to the budget.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I am so pleased to rise and speak to this budget. I was listening to the debate with much interest.

One of the things that I'm really proud of that we are going to accomplish this year, Speaker, is that we are going to have a balanced budget—zero borrowing. I'm going to repeat that again: This year, the Ontario government is going to borrow zero dollars. What is really ironic is that I see the Conservative Party over here, I see the NDP and I see the Liberals. Guess which party is the only party in Ontario to ever balance the books? It's the Ontario Liberals.

The Conservative record when it comes to balanced budgets is—well, we know that they didn't. They tried to fudge the numbers. They tried to somehow make it look like they had balanced the books. It turns out they hadn't. As far as the NDP is concerned, the less said the better about their fiscal management.

One thing that I'm really proud of is that the FES recommits us to the fact that we will be balancing the budget.

The other thing I want to say is that there are many, many things that, as an MPP, I'm proud of, but one of the things that I'm really, truly proud of is voting yesterday in favour of raising the minimum wage. I believe that if somebody does an honest day's work, they ought to get an honest payback. If somebody works a full day, they ought not to have to go to the food bank so they are not hungry.

It was very, very disappointing that the Ontario Conservative Party voted against it. I was very, very dis-

appointed. I don't know how you can defend a situation where somebody is working full-time and is not being paid for an honest day's work.

I'm also very disappointed that the NDP blocked our students from going back to college. I heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about how well her son is doing. Congratulations; I am pleased for her as well. But there are many other students who would have lost a semester had the NDP been governing, because they very clearly indicated they would not legislate them back. Again, it's very disappointing behaviour from the NDP on this issue.

This sort of brings me to the issue here, which is that governing takes maturity. Governing takes being pragmatic sometimes. I believe that, as Ontario Liberals, we are very good at governing.

One of the things that I'm particularly proud of in the FES is the seniors' tax credit. As the Minister of Seniors Affairs, as many of you know, I recently announced our action plan for seniors, which we call Aging with Confidence. Adding to that, this bill will propose to create an Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit, which we announced in the 2017 budget and now we will make good through the FES.

The other thing this bill does is make an adjustment to the seniors' public transit tax credit. This measure was introduced, as some of you may remember, in 2017. What the amendment does is clarify that the transit tax credit for seniors will also be available for passes that are used on more than one ride.

Another thing that this FES has that seniors are going to be very happy about is that we are going to be increasing the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. Let me just explain what that is. The Ontario government is the only province in Canada that guarantees private pensions. Right now, that guarantee is a maximum of \$1,000, but I'm pleased to say that through this bill, we will be raising that pension guarantee to \$1,500.

All in all, as the Minister of Seniors Affairs, there are a number of initiatives here that are very senior-friendly. Overall, I'm very pleased we are going to raise the minimum wage and very pleased we are going to balance the books.

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

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to have another try at this, and it's my pleasure to speak to this bill.

I've been listening to the opposition members doing their debate. The Conservatives are talking about how they don't believe that we are balancing the budget and that we will have the balanced budget going into the next few years, because they're not used to it. The only way they deal with a deficit is to hide it. That's the only way they know how to deal with a deficit.

Of course, the NDP agree to a lot of our ideas, our policies. During question period, we hear that they want these things to be installed, implemented, as soon as possible. But in the afternoon, they have a change of

heart. They think, "Oh, let's debate this more. Let's drag this on. Let's talk about process."

If viewers in front of the TV—take a look at question period, and take a look at the questions coming from the NDP and how much urgency they usually express and how they urge us to move quickly on the files.

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Someone has to talk about the details of what this bill is proposing, its policies. The last time I had a chance to debate this bill, I was talking about the economic reality in Ontario right now. Things are going really well. Our real GDP growth was forecasted at 2.8% in 2017, up from the budget assumption of 2.3%. Over the next two years, the real GDP growth is expected to average about 2.2%. That is amazing. That is really significant in any developed economy.

Just go to my riding of Trinity–Spadina and take a look. You'll see high-tech start-ups housed in reworked buildings. There's a whole bunch of young people starting up businesses and putting their entrepreneurship to work and making real gains and creating jobs.

Also, you can take a look at Stereo D in Liberty Village. Again, that's foreign investment—hundreds of millions of dollars they're bringing to Ontario, creating up to 400 jobs for that community.

These are all very significant. With a balanced budget, with the economy doing well, then we can make real investments in our infrastructure.

We've committed to investing \$190 billion—the largest investment in this province's history—in public infrastructure. That includes hospitals, schools, public transit.

Public transit is a must for an urban centre like Toronto, as well as for the suburbs. We know that the subway will be up and running very soon—the Spadina line going to York University.

I'll talk about this more at a later opportunity.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I think the government forgets that this is a fall economic statement and it's a matter of whether we have confidence in this government's budgeting. When you hear independent officers of the Legislature over and over again say that the numbers we're seeing are not right—the smokescreen they have for this hydro plan, where it's going to cost us \$4 billion more. They just don't care.

I can't believe somebody over there said that we've never had a balanced budget. Just in the last Conservative government, they had a number of balanced budgets, taking over from a large deficit from the government before. In 2003, I was elected mayor of South Glengarry, and we saw the Liberal member coming around giving out cheques in the last two weeks of March—\$3 billion of unbudgeted money given out in the last two weeks of March so that they could say, "Oh, look at the deficit we had." The deficit wasn't there, but they created this. I remember the member saying, "There are so many cheques to give out. I'm going to do some of the photo

ops next week, but the money will be dated March 31.” That was \$3 billion given out in two weeks by this government. That’s the smokescreen we saw back then. So I don’t know how anybody could trust what you’re doing.

This latest fair hydro plan—how much is it actually going to cost us? Understated—any accountant in the world is talking close to \$95 billion of extra cost just to give us a few years of savings. And then we find out from the accountability officer that they tack on an extra \$4 billion—almost \$100 billion just to get re-elected.

You have to start putting the people of Ontario first and put your own party behind them. This is something they just cannot do.

The people in my riding are getting frightened that we might have four more years—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I really feel like we’re in the twilight zone at this stage of the day, because it’s truly a tale of two cities, two Ontarios: the Ontario the Liberals are constructing, and then the lived reality of the people of this province.

Just on the issue of the college strike: Nobody believes that 19 members out of 107 members can block legislation. If we could have blocked legislation, we would have blocked you from selling off Hydro One and ending the asset-generated revenue that we actually had for health care and education. If 19 members could have done that, then we would have stopped you from selling off Hydro One.

It is incredible for me because—I understand that it’s really difficult to be a Liberal right now in the province of Ontario. I mean, I know what I hear at the door, and I can’t even imagine what you guys hear at the door. But let’s stay in the realm of reality, shall we? Let’s just try it. Because when you did sell off Hydro One, and as the Financial Accountability Officer has confirmed and as the Auditor General has confirmed, really sold out the province of Ontario—the largest transfer of wealth from the public, the people we serve, to the private sector in the history of this province. You can spin it all you want because nobody is really paying attention to what happens here, but they are paying attention to their hydro bills, and they get them now—thank you very much—every single month, and they don’t buy what you are selling.

Finally, when the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville says that maturity is needed—how much maturity is needed to get a long-term-care wait-list to 23,000 people in the province of Ontario? That is not maturity. That is pure and simple incompetence, Madam Speaker.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me tell you about the fiction here this afternoon. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talks about “the largest transfer of wealth” in the province. That is wrong. The largest transfer of wealth ever in

the province of Ontario was the sale of the 407. These folks love the Auditor General, but the Auditor General said in 1999 that that asset was worth \$9 billion, so they did the Walmart routine and sold it off for a sale price of \$3 billion.

Then the auditor came back in 2003—Erik Peters, whom they attacked mercilessly when he did a special study of the books to find out that the \$3 billion was a plug number to balance their budget in the 1999 election. That is the correct fact. The only people who ever made any money from the 407 sale are the folks in Madrid, Spain, today, because there’s a second Ontario Place in this world, and it’s in Madrid, because they’ve made all the profits on the 407 sale. That’s a fact that these folks have got to make sure that they recognize.

In fact, there was an article in the National Post, that wonderful beacon of conservatism in the province of Ontario, saying that the 407 is the worst deal ever in the province’s history. The poor folks in Durham region who have to use it day in and day out will pay that exorbitant toll for 99 years, Madam Speaker. And every time the good folks of Peterborough are riding on that section of the 407 that is owned by the consortium in Madrid, they call my office and they say, “Mr. Leal, Jeff, why did they ever make the biggest transfer of wealth in the history of the province of Ontario that was sent to Madrid, Spain?”

If you want to talk about the facts in Ontario, I will enter this debate anytime, anyplace, anywhere to talk about—

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just listened to the minister speak, and I think if we add the sale of Hydro One and all the waste and scandals of the Liberals’ last decade or so, I think it would amount to an excessive amount. I assume from the way he was speaking so passionately that there must be just leasing, because the last time I checked, he’s mixing up selling and leasing. Maybe he doesn’t understand the difference, Madam Speaker.

But what we’re talking about here is we’re talking about an omnibus bill that this government has put forward—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I already said that the next time I stand up, someone is going to be warned. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, you are now warned.

I return to the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: It’s interesting that a minister doesn’t seem to understand the difference between leasing and selling an item.

I think that what we’re talking about here is we really are talking about a process, and we seem to have gotten away from that. This is supposed to be a fall budget bill, and we are debating, actually, the process and the protocol here in the Legislature.

I think that it’s a big learning curve. I’m asked often by people what sort of surprises me since being elected, and I just say that people feel comfortable focusing on

the needs of their party ahead of the taxpayers. I think it was my colleague beside me, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—I think I got it right. Maybe we need to throw into this government omnibus bill something about ridings having only two names so that we can all remember them without tripping over all the names.

I think it is a sad day in the Legislature. It's the end-of-the-week debate, and we're ending on a sad note.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, I'm going to need to get to the government side to wrap up. Minister of Children and Youth Services, would you like to wrap up?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It was a very interesting debate we had. I had the opportunity to hear from many of my colleagues in the Legislature. It was interesting. The issue around the 407 was brought up and it reminds me of a quote from Hansard I read recently. It comes from an MPP named E.J. Douglas Rollins.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A Conservative.

Hon. Michael Coteau: A Conservative MPP. I want members to listen to this quote. It says: "How many dollars do we have invested in the 407 at the present time?" This was back during the debate. He says, "As of March 31"—of that year—"the taxpayers of Ontario have somewhere around \$104 billion" invested into the lands around the 407. Back then, the right-of-way was purchased by Ontarians and they say the estimated value, according to Hansard and the research that was done back then, was about \$100 billion.

So when the Progressive Conservatives stand up and say that they've done an excellent job managing this province when they were in power, the fact that

Conservatives constantly go into debt, even when the economy is good—but beyond that. In fact, the article I was just reading was called the "The Hijack of Ontario," about how Ontario got hijacked by the sale of the 407.

Could you imagine selling an asset for \$3 billion when its estimated value was \$12 billion and the cost to purchase the right-of-way for that land was estimated at \$100 billion? They should be ashamed of themselves.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You did it with Hydro One. You did it with Hydro One.

Hon. Michael Coteau: And the NDP: I'll finally say something about the NDP. The NDP stand in this Legislature telling us to move on. I don't believe that the NDP—and God forbid that they ever come into power in this province. They are more focused on process than actually making things good for the people of Ontario, and they've lost their way.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I recognize the Minister of Seniors Affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to correct my record. I said that we will not be borrowing this fiscal year; I should have qualified that by saying we will not be borrowing for operating purposes.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Point of order, the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I believe I said that the cost of the right-of-way was \$100 billion, but I believe it was \$104 billion.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it is after 6 p.m., I will be adjourning the House until Monday, November 27 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley