

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 128

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 128

2nd Session
41st Parliament

Wednesday
29 November 2017

2^e session
41^e législature

Mercredi
29 novembre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



ISSN 1180-2987

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

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 29 November 2017

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 29 novembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2017, on the motion for 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): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 139. We believe in the importance of reforming the OMB to make it work better. As I said at second reading, the question is not whether to reform the OMB, but how. We need to ensure that individuals and community groups have a say in the future of their neighbourhoods, we need to ensure that our communities are being well planned, and we need to ensure that well-planned housing, including rental, is getting through the planning process in an efficient and timely manner.

Balancing those needs isn't easy; sometimes there's conflict. In fact, we heard this during committee hearings, as different groups came in to ask for exactly the opposite things. We heard from a group that talked about the importance of keeping de novo hearings, followed immediately by a group that talked about the importance of removing those hearings. We had people speak about the importance of having oral hearings and cross-examinations, while other groups applauded the government for eliminating cross-examination and restricting oral hearings.

Mr. Speaker, many groups and individuals have said the OMB needs to be reformed, and, as you know, I agree with them. However, while eliminating the OMB and creating a new appeals body might appear to solve the problem, many of the concerns with the OMB are re-created under the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

The Mimico Lakeshore Community Network said that while they like many parts of the bill, "Some of the worst features of the existing OMB, including the non-transparency of the mediation process and the obstacles to participation by ordinary members of the community, would reappear in the new system."

Just like there are often disagreements within the planning process, as we learned through committee hearings, there is no one answer or change that people agree on. That's why it's so disappointing that the government shut down public hearings and refused to hear from so many groups that will be impacted by this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, there were four days of public hearings scheduled and advertised: October 16, 17, 23 and 24. There was less than a week to apply and there were still 69 people and organizations who put their names forward requesting to speak to this bill. Despite this, on Monday, October 16, the first day of the hearings, the government put forward a motion to cancel two days of public hearings.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Despite this, on October 16, the first day of the hearings, the government put forward a motion to cancel two days of the public hearings. That meant that over 50 individuals and groups didn't get a chance to speak to the committee and bring forward their concerns.

Before the vote, I listed all the organizations and people who had put forward requests, and even though the hearings had been publicly advertised for a week, every Liberal member of the committee still voted to cancel half of the public hearings. Mr. Speaker, there was so much interest in this bill that, during the public hearings, there was an overflow room set up.

As Toronto councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam said: "I wish to register my disappointment that the standing committee decided to cancel public hearings on Bill 139 that were scheduled for Monday, October 23, and Tuesday, October 24, and to shorten the time for written communications from the original deadline of October 24 to October 18."

Going on, "The Planning Act and Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) together have an incredible impact on land use planning in Ontario. The government should not be

making changes to either without giving ample opportunity to listening to the concerns of elected officials and residents. We all want the same thing, which is effective reform.”

As a member of Save Glen Abbey, who wants to have a voice in the future of his community, said in an email, “As I understand, public input has been pushed aside for some reason.”

An agricultural organization said, “We ... are very disappointed about this decision.”

I heard from a Hamilton organization who said, “We are disappointed (and frustrated) to know that two days of hearings were cancelled, and it seems that virtually all representation in the first two days appears to be Toronto or GTA centric.”

A community organization sent an email that said, “I would like to thank you for updating us on the curtailment of committee hearings on the bill. We were hoping to participate in presentation of the FoNTRA brief, which reflects input from 34 representatives of residents’ associations throughout Toronto, spanning the Beach in the east to High Park in the west as well as from north Toronto.”

He went on to say, “We believe that OMB reform is essential and agree with many aspects of Bill 139. We hope that you and other members of the Legislature can improve it, and appreciate your work to this end.”

We received an email from an individual that said: “Our story is a poster child example of why change is needed to support the social policy initiative of public involvement and engagement in land use planning in Ontario. We would love to have told the story to the committee, but alas, we were not able to comply with the available dates.”

Mr. Speaker, I was happy that I was able to read some of their comments into the record and ensure their stories are heard.

A representative of a development organization who had requested to speak said, “This is bad news. Very frustrating. As I understand it, the committee will hear from deputants today, in addition to yesterday, while a variety of deputants who were waiting for a time next week will now not be allowed to appear. What justification did the members provide for the vote to cancel next week’s deputations?”

Mr. Speaker, not only did the government members reduce the number of days for public hearings, they also shortened the timeline for written submissions by a week, leaving many groups scrambling to make a submission after learning that they would be unable to present in person, now with less time to prepare a thoughtful submission.

I hope that the members across the aisle will take the time to explain why they cancelled these public hearings and refused to hear from all these concerned people, because so far they haven’t provided a reason. It wasn’t that we were in a rush to pass the bill, because on the fourth day of the clause-by-clause their chief government whip spoke extensively to the committee about his local concerns. It seems they just didn’t want to hear from the

people who were disappointed and frustrated with the bill and the proposed changes.

0910

As the Minister of Housing said in an update to his constituents, “It is unfortunate that the dates for committee hearings and written submissions on Bill 139 have been changed. The hearings for October 23 and 24 have been cancelled and the written submission deadline has been changed to October 18 at 5 p.m.” That’s the minister in a quote to his constituents. He went on to say, “These procedural changes are not uncommon at the Legislature.” But, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. We’ve got nine conversations going on. I can’t even hear the person speaking. If you want to have a loud conversation, please take it outside. What is wrong with whispering? Why do people have to yell from five seats away or talk loudly when they can go sit beside each other and talk quietly? I’ve never understood that.

Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: He went on to say, “These procedural changes are not uncommon at the Legislature.” But, in my experience—and it has been somewhat of an extended period of time—cancelling public hearings that are already scheduled and advertised is very uncommon, unless there is a lack of demand. In this case, there was significant demand—over 50 people and organizations who wanted to speak—but the government just wasn’t prepared to listen.

I want to take a few minutes to share with this Legislature the list of organizations that didn’t get the opportunity to share their concerns with the committee. Since they didn’t get a chance to speak for themselves, I also want to share a few of their comments to ensure that they are heard.

One of the groups that didn’t get an opportunity to speak was Housing Matters, a community-driven organization with a mission to help increase the stock of housing, primarily through land-use rule reform, for the purpose of affordability. Another group was the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, who would have been able to talk about the impact of this legislation on the rental housing that we so desperately need. Another was the Greater Ottawa Home Builders’ Association, who would have been able to offer valuable information on how the planning process in Ottawa differs from in Toronto.

The Carpenters’ District Council of Ontario asked to speak about their concerns. They represent 30,000 members across Ontario who depend on the construction industry for their livelihood. They also have some concerns about procedural fairness under this bill, which I will be sharing later in my speech since they didn’t get the opportunity to present to the committee.

Another organization that didn’t get to speak was the Bay Cloverhill Community Association, who joined together with three other groups to prepare their comments on this bill. Their area’s MPP has resigned and the

government isn't going to have a by-election, so presenting to committee would be their only opportunity to have their concerns heard. But the government still refused to hear from them. There are parts of the bill that they like, but they are concerned that the government is making the hearing process more complicated and that community participation is not well defined. Those are legitimate concerns, and I wish that they had had an opportunity to share them with the committee.

The North Gwillimbury Forest Alliance is another group with legitimate concerns that didn't get the opportunity to speak. The North Gwillimbury Forest is one of the 10 largest forests in Lake Simcoe's watershed, an expanse of 3,500 acres. They had significant concerns about the Conservation Authorities Act schedule of the bill, but they didn't get an opportunity to speak to the committee to share them in person. I want to commend the chair, Jack Gibbons, on his efforts to get these concerns heard, including attending committees and submitting 57 letters of support for his proposed amendments.

The additional hearing days that the government cancelled would have given us the opportunity to hear from some of the many groups that applied, such as the town of Aurora, the Architectural Conservancy Ontario's Newmarket branch, Bloor Street East Neighbourhood Association, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Cassels Brock lawyers, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association, Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association, Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, McGill Granby Village Residents' Association and the city of Burlington.

We also would have then had the opportunity to hear from Environmental Defence, the town of Ajax, the Downtown Toronto Residents Associations' Alliance, ClubLink, Davies Howe LLP, the Garden District Residents Association, Devine Park LLP, the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations, the Greater Yorkville Residents' Association, Kagan Shastri lawyers, Kingscross Ratepayers Association, Niagara Home Builders' Association, Lakeshore Planning Council, Real Property Association of Canada, South Eglinton Ratepayers' and Residents' Association, Sudbury and District Home Builders' Association, McMillan LLP, Ontario Expropriation Association, Turkstra Mazza Associates, Teddington Park Residents Association and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association.

We would have had the opportunity to hear from individuals with concerns, such as Peter Smith, Chris Barnett, Roslyn Houser, Julie Di Lorenzo, Laurie Thompson, Donald Given and George Popper, an architect, urban designer and builder.

Bill 139 reforms the OMB, which is a significant change, but the bill also includes rewriting the Conservation Authorities Act. Each of these is significant in itself and should have been in separate bills so that they could have been fully debated and given the careful consideration that each act deserves, but once again, the government was more concerned about their political timelines than hearing from the people who would be impacted.

As a result, the organizations that were concerned about the Conservation Authorities Act changes and put forward requests to speak included the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society. They were all denied the opportunity to raise their concerns with that section of this bill.

There were groups who had interest in both parts of the bill, who were conflicted because of supporting it for certain schedules and opposing it for others. As the Canadian Environmental Law Association said in their submission:

"CELA has two main submissions to make to you today. The first is that most of Bill 139, relating to planning matters, should not be passed in its present form. Rather we recommend that the government should withdraw these schedules to the bill and conduct further public consultation on how Ontario's land use planning decisions and appeals should be reformed. However, on the other hand, we do support the proposed schedule 4 relating to the Conservation Authorities Act with some recommendations as we will mention later in our submission."

Another organization that requested to speak and didn't get the opportunity was the London Home Builders' Association. Since they weren't able to present at committee, I'd like to share their email with the Legislature. In response to the cancellation, they said:

"Good afternoon. On behalf of the nearly 300 members of the London Home Builders' Association, I would like to express our frustration and disappointment with the decision by the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy to cancel two days of public hearings on Bill 139, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017.

"Our concern is not just based on the fact that our members' voices were silenced from contributing to the public discussion and consultation on the proposed bill, but we are further concerned that virtually all representation at the standing committee hearings that were not cancelled appears to be Toronto or GTA centric. There was only one presentation from any organization, municipality or stakeholder from southwestern Ontario," and that was the great town of Ingersoll in the riding of Oxford.

The London Home Builders' Association "is aware that other homebuilders' associations outside the GTA also requested delegation status, and while our issues are similar, we do face unique circumstances and we certainly have differing issues beyond what is typically heard from Toronto.

"The LHBA has serious concerns that Bill 139 is a regressive reform package that subverts, or in some cases completely eliminates important procedural rights and the administration of natural justice that existed under existing law and the current policy framework.

"We are further concerned that the proposed legislative changes will actually make the land use planning and appeal system more expensive, involving more lawyers,

and will further politicize the planning process. We work diligently in our community towards protecting current housing affordability for our local residents and are concerned we have been denied an opportunity to advise you of our local experience.” That email is signed by the executive officer of the London Home Builders’ Association.

0920

I want to share a portion of the written submission from the Swansea Area Ratepayers’ Association. They said, “In the absence of being able to make an oral presentation as requested in our application of October 10, 2017, we are sharing the concerns of the Swansea Area Ratepayers’ Association (SARA) and Swansea Area Ratepayers’ Group (SARG) by sending this written submission.”

They went on to say, “Based on media notices to date, it appeared that we had until 5 p.m. on the 24th of October, 2017 to provide written commentary. We have now been advised that we have to have our written comments in by 5 p.m. tomorrow, October 18, 2017. These comments are now being provided in light of this significant change in timing.”

Mr. Speaker, this is an organization that has had extensive experience with the planning appeals process. As they said, “We have in the last four years appeared numerous times before the Ontario Municipal Board, multiple times at pre-hearings, hearings and mediations both formal and informal, on such varied matters as DPS, the harmonized bylaw, OPAs, both in support and opposed to the position of the city. We have also been involved in matters where the applicant has appealed the inaction of the city.”

They pointed out a number of places where the bill would make it very difficult for community organizations such as theirs to have a voice in the planning process under Bill 139. We put forward amendments to address some of their concerns, and I will provide more information on those a little later.

The submission from the Swansea Area Ratepayers’ Association closed with, “We would have been willing to provide more specific commentary and suggestions but, given the surprise of this shortened notice period, this is the most we could do. Our communities and neighbours deserve better.”

Municipalities, environmental organizations, ratepayer groups, builders and housing advocates all deserve better. They deserve a chance to speak and share their concerns. They deserve the time to write submissions for the deadline they believe they had. They deserve an opportunity to suggest amendments that would make this bill better.

The only thing that all presenters agreed on was that the OMB should be reformed; that it could function better. We share that belief. We listened to the presenters and put forward amendments that would have strengthened the bill to ensure community groups had a say in the future of their communities and that well-planned developments could get through the system to help address our housing shortage. I’m pleased that the government

accepted a few of our amendments, but I think if they had been willing to listen to community groups, environmental organizations and housing industry experts, this bill could have been improved. It could have created a planning appeals tribunal that was truly in the best interest of community building and city planning, that balanced the needs of neighbourhoods and developers, and that was created using the advice of the groups who use it most.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs was asked about one of the amendments in the House and it was disturbing that he didn’t even seem to be aware of some of the strong amendments that we put forward. Clearly, the government needs to listen and communicate more.

The government not only cancelled two public hearing days, they also moved up a number of deadlines, including the one for amendments. It was clear that deadline was too short because all three parties submitted additional amendments after the deadline, including the government.

The deadline for written submissions was also too short. On October 16, the government moved up the deadline for written submission from October 24 to October 18. This meant that organizations just had two days to finish their submissions and get them to the committee. It also meant that many organizations didn’t see the change in timing and missed the deadline. That meant that input from important groups didn’t reach the committee until after we had considered the relevant section of the bill.

While I’m disappointed that there were many organizations that did not get a chance for input, I’m pleased that both the Attorney General and the Minister of Municipal Affairs did speak to the committee. They spent an hour with the committee answering questions and providing clarification about the bill, and I want to thank them and commend them for doing that.

I also want to thank the staff and lawyers of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Natural Resources who provided assistance and clarification during the clause-by-clause. I appreciate that they were providing information to help us as a committee to try and make the bill better.

Mr. Speaker, we worked hard to try and improve this bill because we believe OMB reform is important and necessary. In fact, I think all three parties and every presenter to the committee agreed that OMB reform is needed. Again, the question is, how? There are a number of competing interests, and it is difficult to design a system that ensures everyone is heard without adding excessive delays and costs.

There are some places where the government got it right, and there are a number of places where they could have done better. We put forward a number of amendments that would have made the bill better. I’m happy that the government did accept a couple of our amendments, but I’m disappointed that they didn’t accept more. Some of these issues can be addressed by regulations, and I hope the government will do that. These issues are

important, and we need to ensure that we have a system that works, that respects municipal decision-making, helps well-planned developments get built and provides communities with a voice in their future.

While we support the goal of the OMB reform, we are disappointed that the government missed so many opportunities to make the bill better. I want to take a few minutes to talk about some of those amendments and why we felt they would have improved the bill.

A number of community organizations, including the Greater Beach Neighbourhood Association, raised concerns that this bill will make it more difficult for community organizations to participate in the appeal process, including by requiring them to have the legal and professional planning advice necessary to properly frame a notice of appeal within a 20-day period. We need to ensure that the planning process is accessible to all and that community organizations are able to have a say in the future of their neighbourhood.

In their submission, Environmental Defence spoke about the need to improve the process rather than restrict public participation. They said, "If citizens want to participate in a hearing under the LPAT they will need to submit a request to the tribunal to appear as a party, and the tribunal can deny the request. Outside of urban areas most appeals are from third parties who are often raising environmental or health-related planning matters. In these cases, the existing OMB is seen as [a] last hope to have issues heard and addressed when they have been inadequately addressed in the municipal political arena."

They continued by saying, "There is no doubt the changes proposed under Bill 139 will result in fewer hearings, but the reform also may restrict the public's right to participate and this outcome may not serve the public interest."

As the Canadian Environmental Law Association said, "In light of these provisions, Bill 139 will make it exceedingly difficult for CELA's client community to play a meaningful role in the land use decision-making process, or to ensure that decision-makers are held accountable through appropriate appellate procedures."

We put forward four different amendments to ensure that community groups would be able to participate fully in the new appeal system, and we were pleased that local organizations such as the Vanier Community Association supported the amendments.

The first was to ensure that parties to the appeal cannot be combined without their consent. If there are a number of parties who want to participate in an appeal, under Bill 139 the tribunal can simply choose one of the parties to represent the group and prevent the others from participating.

The Swansea Area Ratepayers Association was one of the groups that applied to speak to the committee but was unable to because the public hearing was cancelled, so I wanted to share their comments about ensuring that local neighbourhood groups have a say. In their written submission, the Swansea Area Ratepayers Association said, "When the matter goes to the Ontario Municipal Board,"

or a tribunal, in the case of the city of Toronto, "rate-payers and community groups are usually advised by city legal that city legal represents the wishes of city council and not the community even when they are on the same side. As a result it is not sufficient to state that the fact the city will be present at the board [means] that rate-payers and community groups will have their concerns represented."

We put forward an amendment to ensure these groups would not be combined without their consent, but the government voted it down.

There are also concerns about the ability of these groups to participate in oral hearings. As you know, Bill 139 limits the oral hearings that will be held, but if they do occur, we want to ensure that community groups would be eligible to participate. Bill 139 says that if a decision is appealed, only the parties to the appeal can participate. That means that if the developer appeals a municipal decision, community organizations would no longer be eligible to participate. We put forward an amendment which would have created an opportunity for other parties to participate as appropriate, but it too was voted down by the government. They are silencing community groups, not only by cancelling the committee hearings for the bill, but also in the planning process under the new tribunal.

0930

Under the Ontario Municipal Board Act, the board had the discretion to waive fees as they deemed appropriate, but the new bill limits this to low-income individuals, meaning that non-profit organizations are no longer eligible to have their fees waived. We put forward an amendment to correct this oversight by adding that the tribunal can also waive fees for non-profit organizations. Many communities and environmental groups are often local organizations, funded by donations from members and concerned citizens. Anyone who has been involved with an OMB appeal knows that the cost can be significant, which makes it challenging for individual and community organizations.

As the Greater Beach Neighbourhood Association's written submission said, "In GBNA's view, Bill 139 does not address financial barriers to meaningful participation by resident associations and community members in LPAT appeals."

We are pleased that the government has taken some steps to address the cost barriers and to provide assistance to help people have a say in their community, but we are disappointed that they still chose to vote against the amendment.

Under Bill 139, the tribunal can also simply decide that certain parties cannot participate in an appeal, even if they had been involved in the municipal decision and sent in a written submission. We put forward an amendment that would require the tribunal to provide reasons in writing if they decline to have a party participate in an appeal. This would provide accountability and ensure that every request to participate is fully considered. But as you might have guessed, that too was voted down.

When we talk about ensuring people have a say in the future of their community, I always think of the people and organizations in my riding who are working to fight a proposed landfill located near the Thames River and one of Ingersoll's main drinking water wells. I know how much they want a say in the future of their community, and there are many other groups like them across Ontario. We put forward an amendment that would have ensured that garbage from other communities cannot be forced on unwilling host municipalities. This is consistent with what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture said during an interview at ROMA a year and a half ago. This would not only allow residents in my riding of Oxford to protect their drinking water, it would give municipalities from across Ontario more say in the future of their communities. But the government voted it down. I was pleased that although they didn't vote in favour of the amendment, they indicated support for it. I look forward to discussions on how we can achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, another concern for community groups is that, as currently written, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act takes precedence over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. As we all know, the Statutory Powers Procedure Act sets out the rules for fair hearings and procedures for all types of legal proceedings. It provides protection for individuals and organizations to ensure that legal proceedings are fair and follow the proper process.

As I mentioned earlier, the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario has concerns about this section. Due to the cancelled public hearings, they didn't get a chance to share those concerns, so I want to share part of a letter they wrote to the committee, which said: "The carpenters are also very concerned that many of the procedural reforms under Bill 139, including the overruling of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, are contrary to the right to procedural fairness and principles of natural justice in Canada and risk constitutional challenge. In the event that these procedural reforms are challenged, any final decisions will be bogged down in a court system that is notoriously slow, thus risking potentially extreme delays to construction in Ontario."

Concerns were also raised by the Advocates for Effective OMB Reform, which is a group of lawyers that have appeared at the OMB representing all parties, including municipalities, developers and community groups. They said:

"Bill 139 explicitly prevails over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, the cornerstone legislation ensuring procedural fairness for administrative tribunals in the province of Ontario.

"The proposed procedure is not fair, just and will not lead to the expeditious resolution of the merits of an appeal.... The tribunal owes a duty of fairness to all persons involved in a proceeding. As the proposed regulations and rules have not been introduced, the act cannot be evaluated to determine its impact on procedural fairness."

Their concerns were shared by the Canadian Environmental Law Association, who said, "We are concerned

that the as-yet unwritten Local Planning Appeal Tribunal rules of practice and procedure prevail over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act where there is 'conflict' between the LPAT rules and the procedural safeguards entrenched in the SPPA."

The development community has similar concerns. David Bronskill of BILD said, "Right now, the tribunal's rules would have priority over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. This, to me, is an extraordinary and potentially unlawful remedy. A simple change to the legislation would ensure that the rules must comply with the SPPA, which codifies centuries of common law jurisprudence regarding fairness."

A number of groups, including the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Advocates for Effective OMB Reform, the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society, Environment North and the Building Industry and Land Development Association sent a joint letter to the Premier asking for reconsideration of the act.

In the letter they said, "Possibly the biggest unintended consequence is the fact that Bill 139 reduces or eliminates important procedural rights enjoyed by Ontarians under the existing framework. Simply stated, Bill 139 takes due process out of the system. Procedural fairness and natural justice—core tenets of our legal system for centuries—are effectively curtailed. Under Bill 139, all groups—whether developers, residents or other interested parties—will be very limited in their ability to engage in the process and to hold decision-makers to account."

It's hard for many people to understand the impact of allowing the legislation, regulation and even rules created by the tribunal to take precedence over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

Let me give you an example: As I mentioned earlier, under this bill the tribunal has the power to decide that certain people or groups cannot be a party to an appeal. Let's say a community group has opposed a development. The municipality turns the development down and the developer appeals that to the tribunal. Under this bill, the tribunal can simply decide that the group has no right to participate in the appeal. To ensure that they are properly considered and not simply dismissed, we put forward an amendment that would require the tribunal to provide written reasons if they don't allow an individual organization to participate.

The parliamentary assistant announced that the government was voting against our amendment because there was already a requirement under the Statutory Powers Procedure Act for the tribunal to provide written reasons. We asked for clarification and the ministry's own lawyers confirmed that since the tribunal's rules take precedence over the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, if they don't want to provide written reasons they can simply create a rule that written reasons aren't required and then they don't have to provide them anymore. That gives the tribunal the ability to simply change any part of the legislation and procedure process that they don't like.

That's why we put forward an amendment to ensure that the Statutory Powers Procedure Act would take precedence. This would have protected the rights of individuals and organizations that are appearing before the tribunal but, again, the government just simply voted it down.

After our amendment was voted down, Advocates for Effective OMB Reform sent a letter to the Premier which said, "On multiple occasions, we have come forward to express our concern for the violation of natural justice proposed in this bill. We have made submissions, engaged in dialogue with your officials, made presentations and offered amendments to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and, most recently, issued a joint letter with a number of industry and environmental groups. In each instance, we have highlighted significant issues with this legislation, in particular that it violates the very protections citizens are supposed to be afforded under the law. None of these entreaties have led to any changes in the bill or in your government's approach."

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, there are some positives in the bill. We agree with the government's decision to provide additional support for people who are appealing a land use decision; however, we want to ensure that the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre serves all people of Ontario, not just the people launching an appeal in Toronto.

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The issues that people are facing in other regions are different from those in Toronto. As Karen Peterson, Environment North, said, "Planning issues are quite different in this region." She went on to say, "Northern townships are experiencing increased pressure to develop lands in populated areas, yet the local planning boards are not as equipped as the GTA municipalities that have extensive bureaucracies and sufficient funds to hire subject matter experts."

We also heard about the differences in the north from the Sudbury home builders when they asked the committee to travel there for committee hearings. They said:

"Bill 139, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017, proposes substantive amendments to the scope, powers and function of the OMB. The proposed legislative changes will have considerable implications for economic development and growth in northern Ontario. Our members are very concerned that the unique circumstances and needs of northern Ontario may be overlooked by the government and we respectfully request that the standing committee make the effort to travel to Sudbury, not just to hear from the Sudbury and District Home Builders' Association, but also from other businesses, municipalities and members of the public—the views of northern Ontario must be heard on this important piece of legislation."

To ensure that the appeal support centre understands the needs of different regions and provides assistance across the province, we put forward an amendment which would have required the members of the board to be from across Ontario, including at least one member from the

north and one from rural Ontario. But the government again voted that down, meaning that the support centre could end up being very Toronto-centric, ignoring the voices and inputs of rural and northern Ontario.

We also put forward amendments to increase transparency at the local appeal support centre by adding requirements that they must table their annual report and annual audit in the Legislature. Currently, the bill only requires that the annual report and audit be provided to the minister, not made public or tabled in the Legislature. That means these documents could be sent to the ministry and stuck in a filing drawer without anyone really looking at them to see whether the support centre is helping the people it should and spending taxpayers' money responsibly. The government says that of course the minister will be looking at these documents closely, but based on history with this government, we know that isn't the case.

Look at the Housing Services Corp., which is required by legislation to give their annual report to the minister each year, and yet they were able to get away with gross misuse of funds until members of the opposition began to look at their spending. It wasn't until we filed an FOI request that the minister paid attention to the many trips to Europe, the luxury dinners, the expensive bottles of wine and the questionable salary practices, including one executive who was being paid for two full-time jobs at the same time.

Giving the report to the minister wasn't sufficient to stop them from investing housing money in a numbered company in Manchester, England, whose only address was the lawyer's office, or to stop HSC from paying for a seven-day luxury vacation in South Africa for a board member. It took public scrutiny, questions in the Legislature, press conferences and investigative media to address the spending at the Housing Services Corp. If we don't have the ability to review the spending of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, how can we ensure that there is no misspending?

Look at Ornge air ambulance, where the ministry received an annual budget, audited financial statements, five-year business plans and quarterly financial reports, but still the organization was able to spiral out of control.

Mr. Speaker, time and again, Ontarians have seen scandals like these under this government. The public deserves to see how their money is being spent and scrutinize the practices of organizations like these that are set up to serve the public.

The Ontario Municipal Board Act required that the annual report be tabled in the Legislature, so those amendments were simply asking that in the new act, the government maintain the same level of transparency and accountability that the public expects. But they voted it down. Instead, the bill will actually result in less transparency and accountability.

We also put forward an amendment to increase transparency by requiring the hearings to be public, even if they were conducted electronically. But again, they voted it down.

The government also voted down a number of amendments that we put forward that were requested by the municipalities of Ontario. Under Bill 139, a policy statement issued under the Metrolinx Act, the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act or a prescribed policy or statement are each deemed to be a provincial policy statement for the purpose of this act.

As we all know, when you have more than one government document, there is potential for them to be in conflict.

As AMO said, “The intent of the provincial policy statement is to assemble all provincial policy that affects land use planning into one document to simplify and thus ensure all municipal planning is done in keeping with the provincial policies. In the past, planners had to sift through some hundred different pieces of legislation, regulation, and guidance to find provincial policy.”

The Manitoulin Planning Board had a similar concern. In a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, they said, “The designation of new provincial plans and policy statement without consultation or even notification will introduce significant uncertainty in the planning process, forcing planning authorities, proponents and citizens to navigate a constantly changing policy environment.”

We put forward an amendment to address this concern and reduce the confusion and conflicting direction by ensuring that the tribunal is looking at the provincial policy statement when they are making decisions, but the government voted that down. We also put forward an amendment that AMO requested to remove the government’s proposal to set qualifications for conservation authority boards. While it sounds good in theory, currently most conservation authority members are locally elected municipal councillors. You can’t force members of the public to elect municipal councillors with specific educational backgrounds. If the minister sets a requirement for CA board members, such as they must be engineers or biologists, as the ministry staff suggested in our briefing, that would mean most councillors couldn’t sit on a conservation authority.

Municipalities cover many of the conservation authorities’ costs and should therefore have the ability to appoint councillors to the board to ensure municipal funds are expended appropriately.

During a presentation to committee, AMO president Lynn Dollin said, “Part IV, section 12 of the bill states that municipal councils continue to have the authority to appoint conservation authority board members. This makes sense. Municipal councillors are representative of all walks of life in an area, and it is the council that pays the greatest proportion of the conservation authority’s funding. However, section 40(1)(a) of the bill indicates that the Lieutenant Governor in Council ‘may make regulations governing the composition of conservation authorities and prescribing additional requirements regarding the appointment and qualifications of members of conservation authorities.’ AMO has consistently maintained that until the province reinstates significant funding to conservation authorities, municipal govern-

ment, as the major funder, should have sole right to appoint board members.”

And I agree with that, Mr. Speaker. One of the concerns that we talked about on second reading is that the name of the new tribunal is confusing. “Local planning appeals tribunal” makes it sound like each municipality has an individual appeal tribunal, when in fact it is a provincial body. People are already confusing the tribunal with the local appeal body, which is individual to each municipality. We put forward an amendment to end the confusion by changing the name to the Ontario planning appeal tribunal, but the government voted that down.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do more to address the housing shortage in Ontario. We have 171,000 families waiting for social housing. We have vacancy rates of 1%, which is essentially no vacancy, and we are still having housing affordability challenges. Statistics Canada recently reported that the number of Ontarians in core housing need has increased by 130,000 since 2011. This is people who are living in homes that need major repairs, aren’t large enough for the family, or that they can’t afford.

These are not just Toronto problems. StrategyCorp recently did a survey of CAOs from small- and medium-sized municipalities and found that they were overwhelmingly concerned that housing affordability would continue to decrease in Ontario, placing increased burdens on municipal social services.

Over and over, this government has lengthened the planning process. They have added 30 days here and 30 days there. For some they have good justification, but then you add them all up. We have a planning process that discourages building, a process that forces builders to pay significant carrying costs, which are then passed on to new homeowners and renters. We put forward a number of amendments to streamline the process, but the government voted them down. We know that to address the housing shortage and affordability, we need to reduce delays in the planning process. That’s why a PC government would remove the extra delays that this government has added.

We also put forward an amendment that would allow the tribunal to proceed with considering an appeal if a municipality passes a motion acknowledging that their decision is inconsistent with the provincial policy statement or conflicts with official plans.

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The planning process is already long, and adding more delays doesn’t benefit anyone. If a municipality has knowingly made a decision that is inconsistent with the provincial policy statement, this would allow them to acknowledge that so the tribunal can proceed with the hearing and decision rather than having the delay of sending it back to the municipality.

The government member said that a municipality would never knowingly make a decision that is against the planning process, but I can tell you that in my riding, the municipalities have been very clear that they are not

approving a landfill beside the Thames River, no matter what the provincial policy says. That was one that would apply in this case.

For many communities that are fighting these appeals, it's already a long and stressful process. They would like it resolved as soon as possible. I have seen that first-hand with this group in my riding that is fighting this landfill. They shouldn't have to wait for the tribunal to determine that the decision is against the policy statement and refer it back to the municipality, only to have it referred back to the tribunal because the municipality has no intention of changing their decision. If a municipality knows that it has not conformed to the official policy statement or the official plan and has no intention of changing that decision, it should not be held up waiting for a time period to pass before it can go to the tribunal. This would have made the process more efficient for everyone and resolved the issues more quickly, but the government voted it down.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the appeal is due to the fact that municipalities have not made a decision. Under Bill 139, if a municipality fails to make a decision, it goes to the tribunal, they refer it back to the municipality, and everyone continues to wait. We put forward an amendment that would allow the tribunal to make the decision at the first hearing unless the municipality passes a motion indicating that they are prepared to make a new decision and request the opportunity to do so. That means that if a municipality is ready to make a decision, they have the right to do so, but if a municipality isn't ready to make a decision, it would avoid the delay and expense of the application being heard by the tribunal and referring it back to the municipality, only to return to the tribunal for a second hearing after the waiting period.

Our amendment would have reduced this delay, but the government refused to pass it. Ironically, one of the only places that this bill tries to reduce delays is one we can't support because it removes the rights of property owners.

A PC government would ensure that all ministries have respect for and understanding of the importance of protecting private property rights. Each ministry would have to demonstrate a strong public need to encroach on private property rights. I wish that we were seeing that same commitment from this government.

Bill 139 once again allows access to private property without a warrant. This government has added this clause in a number of pieces of legislation. When we questioned it, what was their justification? They said they were making it consistent with other recent changes. Mr. Speaker, when you're doing something wrong, pointing out that you have been making the same mistake other places is not a valid excuse.

In this case, the tribunal is looking at land use planning issues. They're rarely going to be urgent, and in most cases the owner of the land to be assessed will be involved in the appeal, so getting permission to enter the property would be relatively easy.

There are very valid reasons that a search warrant might be required. As the Ontario Federation of Agricul-

ture said in their submission, "A warrantless unannounced visit to enter and inspect is excessive and unnecessary. Many farm operations utilize biosecurity provisions to minimize the risk of disease, pathogen or pest transfers to livestock, poultry and crops carried on vehicle tires or footwear. Simply put, restricting access to farms minimizes the risks of disease transfers. Warrantless entry fails to acknowledge that unannounced entry into areas frequented by livestock or crops can pose a risk not only to those animals or crops, but also to the entrant themselves, as they are unaware of potential risks inherent on the farm." We put forward an amendment to require people accessing property to have a warrant or permission of the owner and a companion amendment which would create emergency exemptions if evidence was at risk of being destroyed, but the government voted both of them down.

Bill 139 also allowed tribunal members and employers to enter private property without requiring them to identify themselves to the owner or occupier unless asked. We pointed out the risks this creates, such as biosecurity on farms and safety hazards on construction sites.

I'm pleased that the government listened and supported our amendment to require the person entering the property to proactively identify themselves. This change will help prevent injuries and will respect the rights of property owners.

The government also supported one of our amendments regarding transition. Previously, the bill allowed the minister to decide case-by-case what appeals should be continued before the OMB and what would be moved to the new tribunal. We were concerned that it could look like the minister was treating his friends differently by sending their appeals where they had the greatest chance of success. We put forward an amendment to remove this conflict of interest by clarifying that the regulations had to identify the class or type of appeal that was being moved to the new tribunal, rather than case-by-case. We're pleased that the government supported our amendment; this will help provide clarity and avoid the appearance of conflict.

However, there are still a number of concerns about transition and timing. As a councillor from Aurora said, "Is this new legislation perfect? No. Nothing is ever perfect. There are a number of issues that need to be clarified before the final draft is enacted—in particular what constitutes a major transit station area and what are the implications for smaller communities like Aurora when considering MTSAs in official plans; what sunset provisions will be built into the act so that we avoid a run on appeals before this act comes into effect or confusion about what provisions apply to appeals that are currently under way. I think transition will be the key issue going forward as we move from the previous legislation to the new legislation and all that entails."

We heard from a number of people about their concerns on transition. I want to encourage the government to ensure that they have it right and that municipalities are prepared before they launch the new system.

There has been a lot of discussion about how the limited appeals will impact hearings at municipalities. I think it is a conversation that AMO and municipalities need to have before the new system launches. It may be that they need to make changes to their hearing process, to give builders more time to present or to make other changes in their planning process.

The impact of the planning appeals process is significant. It impacts homes, communities and the environment. We need to ensure that we have it right. We will be watching for draft regulations, and we will be looking for the timing of the transition to be based on research, consultation and good planning.

The transition isn't the only part of this bill that is left to regulation. In their written submission, the Greater Beach Neighbourhood Association said, "The lack of information about the funding and operation of the proposed Local Planning Appeal Support Centre ... makes it impossible to evaluate whether the LPASC can meaningfully address the financial and other barriers to participation of resident associations and community members in the LPAT appeals."

The Downtown Toronto Residents Associations' Alliance had the same concern with the lack of information when we had our briefing with the ministry. They were unable to even answer basic questions, such as who the support centre would assist and what the budget would be. As the support centre is put in place and the regulations implemented in this bill are developed, we will be watching to see that the government does it right, that they ensure that people get a say in the future of their communities, that we protect environmentally sensitive and agricultural land and that we get the housing that people so desperately need.

I think on that one it's important to recognize that that's again about the centre that does the funding to help individuals in an appeal. The way the bill is presently written, it doesn't help the organization of individuals to do the appeal. With that, it would take a lot of the ability of communities working together to make sure that their community concerns were heard in each and every appeal that went forward. I think it's also very important in this part that we recognize that we need to open it up in the regulations, to make sure that people are not prohibited from appealing the decision after the decision is made, where it's not made in their best interests. If they just made a comment on it but weren't an applicant in the appeal, we want to make sure that they can actually be heard.

We support OMB reform. We are disappointed that the government missed so many opportunities to make this bill better, to add transparency and to ensure that applications and appeals have been fair and objective and follow proper procedures. Some of these issues can be addressed by regulation, and I hope the government will do that. These issues are important, and we need to ensure that we have a system that works, that respects municipal decision-making, helps well-planned developments get built and provides communities with a voice

for their future. I think it's very important, that last line. I think the whole thing is set up to try and make the system work better for municipalities, and I totally support that. But I think we want to make sure, in the process, that we don't do that at the expense of the community and that the people who live in this community have their involvement.

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If you look at the appeals that are presently going to the Ontario Municipal Board, Mr. Speaker—and I want to just make this very clear—the appeals going there, where the public is involved: They are there because they are concerned about their community. They are never there to—I shouldn't say "never," but the community is not very often there to further their own interest. It's always the community interest. We want to do everything we can in this bill to make sure that we don't take away some of their rights and abilities to defend the community position, as I mentioned, for the good folks who are opposed to a landfill in Oxford—that we move it forward more expeditiously but make sure we don't take away their ability to voice their concerns to be heard within the system; as appeals go forward, that they're not let out of those appeals.

Again, I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this time to critique what was in there. Mostly the critique, I suppose, was what the government didn't do, which was to listen to the people who wanted to be heard.

I made reference to the chief government whip, who did make a presentation to the committee. I used him in my presentation because what the government did with the timing of it—it could not possibly have been that the government was that anxious to get it done quickly because there was enough time to make a presentation, as I did myself on another issue. We very much appreciate that, but I think that pointed out that we could have and should have taken more time to hear from the people who wanted to be heard so we could address some of those things.

A lot of those issues that I spoke about in our presentation this morning—I think the government, when they go back to their office and reassess what the bill does, would say, "Gosh, with a lot of those, we could have fixed that without any negative impact to anyone else." It would have made the bill better for the people who wanted it that way.

Again, thank you very much for giving me the time. We look forward to further debate on the bill.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I was listening to the member intently on his one-hour lead-in. He made some good points. He talked about that he felt there wasn't enough consultation or enough presentations during committee. It was evident that people felt that way. That speaks to what the government has been doing: time-allocating everything. They're also extending that time allocation to committee.

He talked about the legal process, that there are concerns around that, and that can be challenged. When you have a bill, we don't want those complications to happen. We want to make sure that people can go through the system and actually get the outcome that it's supposed to give them.

He questioned the tribunal process and the powers of not allowing certain groups to participate through that process when there's a development challenge.

He also talked about amendments with reference to the composition of the support centre, and how those were shot down.

He made a lot of good points as to why we really need to pay attention and hear from the public during the committee process in order to change the bill or amend things in bills to have them work the way they're intended.

Mr. Speaker, recently I noticed that there was an article in the Toronto Star. This is the headline: "Developers Racing to OMB Ahead of New Provincial Planning Rules." What has happened is, "City officials are warning that developers are rushing en masse to appeal problematic applications to the powerful provincial tribunal that oversees land use planning in order to avoid a less favourable system."

So you see, there are a lot of things going on with regard to Bill 139, and we have to make sure that when we're debating things, we have ample opportunity to get it right, to hear voices from all sides and concerns, so that the bill works with the intentions that we, here in the House, write.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you for allowing me a couple of minutes to make comments on the member from Oxford.

I had the opportunity to work with him in committee on clause-by-clause. Frankly, Speaker, listening to him this morning, my take from it is that he does support what we've done. He was struggling to find issues with what we've done. He was really struggling. But anyway, I take that as a good positive. We had some good discussion during clause-by-clause.

Let me focus and maybe spend some time talking about the lack of consultation. I only hoped that the member would have attended some of the public meetings we had across the province, which I attended the majority of, because he would have seen the consultation process that took place from anybody who wanted to come in and talk about what we were doing. There was an enormous amount of consultation in different communities across the province. That's what drove the government to come up with this legislation, Bill 139.

I want to touch on the conservation authorities. The reality is that their conservation act wasn't touched for a long, long time. I know that Conservation Ontario and the majority of the conservation authorities had an enormous amount of input, and, frankly, we came out with, I believe, a good product. Yes, it went through hearings. It

went through clause-by-clause to some length, quite some length, but it was a good, healthy discussion and we appreciate the contribution from all sides.

I hope at the end of the day, through the regulatory process, we come out with something we can all live with.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to speak about this. Well, actually, I'm not entirely pleased to rise again, because this will be the fourth time in seven sitting days that we have to speak about the fact that the people of Ontario are being truncated and terminated from speaking yet again. I have to tell you, Speaker, I've spoken about closure three times in this Legislature in the last couple of days, and now here we are, where members are being cut out of speaking at a committee. I have noticed that this is not an isolated incident. This is a pattern that we see from this government.

I've said it before; carved over a hundred years ago into the walls here is "Audi alteram partem," "Hear the other side." That's what the government is supposed to do. They're supposed to listen to us as we represent the people. Not only do they not want to listen to us here in the opposition; they don't want to listen to the people. They don't want them to come to those hearings. They are afraid of what they will hear at those hearings. That's become painfully obvious in this Legislature, and that's very, very sad.

The Speaker speaks often about the race to the bottom. I think we've now seen the bottom, and it's not a pretty sight to know what it's like when you see the people of Ontario and the opposition members cut out and shut out of the opportunity to stand in the Legislature or to come to Toronto—or hearings elsewhere in Ontario, where they should be—and have those opportunities to speak.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the comments that were made by the member from Oxford. First of all, I have to say he's quite correct that there was not a proper consultation that took place. As Chair of the committee, I was there for the debates. I had to deal with the people who wanted to speak, who were told, "No, there's no room."

I understand, listening to the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, that there was a consultation process that took place before the bill was developed. Fair enough; that's probably a good idea. But once a bill is developed, once you have in your hands exactly what the government is proposing to do, that's a whole different animal, and that's one where people should have the opportunity, on an extensive basis, to come in and speak about it.

It was pretty clear, when city of Toronto councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam wasn't able to get a speaking spot, that this was not an adequate process. There's just no getting around it. The member from Oxford and our member from Windsor-Tecumseh were very strong in speaking for more consultation, and they were right.

I want to note that in the course of debating the bill the member for St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, and our member from Welland, Ms. Forster, came to the committee to look for amendments to deal with conservation authorities that have gone off the rails. In fact, both members spoke to the problems with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and made a very convincing case that structures had to be in place to deal with problems when there was clearly an approach that caused deep problems in their communities. I'm being very gentle, Speaker. I am very sorry the committee didn't pick up on the changes that they were proposing, because I think in fact the situation in Niagara is quite serious.

Lastly—my colleague from London—Fanshawe spoke about this—not setting a date for transition to the OMB is a problem.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to thank the member from London—Fanshawe, the parliamentary assistant and the members from Nipissing and Toronto—Danforth for their kind comments.

Just a couple of things. The comments from London—Fanshawe: I think that's so important. I believe that the transition rules should have been in the legislation, because we are now seeing all kinds of people trying to decide whether it can be for their benefit to apply or to withdraw their application dealing with what's going on, or to stop development altogether while we're waiting for the regulation to be made. Now that it's not in the legislation, I hope that the ministry will do that as quickly as possible.

The other thing is, I wanted to speak to the parliamentary assistant's comments about the consultation. If he had listened to my presentation, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't that I thought I needed to know more about the process. It was that I believe that I should have been able to learn what was needed in the bill from the people who came to present.

I talked the whole hour about people who would have wanted to come to committee because they had information that could help us make this bill a better bill. The consultation was mentioned by the member from Toronto—Danforth. It wasn't the consultation that was taking place around the province of what needed to be done. Now that we have come to a template of what needs to be done, have the people come in who know what needs to be done to see if this is the right way to do it. If they had done that and if they had taken the time—I think the member from Nipissing mentioned the time frame and the time allocations. This bill wasn't time-allocated. The government didn't seem to think there was any great rush to get it done.

Why didn't we take a little bit more time to get information so we could have done it right? Yes, I think there are a lot of good things in this bill, but I think what could have happened if we had worked together is we could have made it a lot better—not for some, but for all.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: This afternoon, we have a choir coming from Broadlands Public School. I'd like to welcome the two teachers who lead the choir, Madame Kim and Madame Schatz. Thank you so much.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce in the members' gallery somebody who heads up the Terry Fox Run in Oakville, Nathalie de Caen. She also works in my office at the Ministry of Labour. Please welcome her to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guest from the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University, Palmer Lockridge, as well as Tommi-Lee Gauthier from Laurentian and Antonio Brieva from Waterloo University. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I want to welcome students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Andrew Clubine, Roch Goulet, Nadia Bathish and Chandra Narra, who I had the pleasure of meeting this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome in the members' gallery Don O'Neil from the great city of Quinte West. He's visiting Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome some excellent partners of ours from the Lung Association here in Ontario. The Lung Association is the leading organization working to promote lung health. Please join me in welcoming George Habib, Peter Glazier, Eric Pegolo and Monica Kocsmaros.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I met with OUSA this morning and they presented their mental health strategy, In It Together. I met with Stephanie Bellotto, Andrew Clubine and Aidan Hibma. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to welcome to the Legislature constituents from Etobicoke—Lakeshore: Kyra Trainor, former page Zara Trainor and future page candidate Sullivan Pearson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome from OUSA a number of students who are here from various institutions. Nadia Bathish is here from Brock, Chandra Narra from Trent-Durham, Stephanie Bellotto from Wilfrid Laurier, Ryan Deshpande from McMaster, Roch Goulet from Laurentian, Aidan Hibma from Brock, and Kanwar Brar from Laurier, as well as Sophie Helpard, who is the executive director of OUSA. Welcome, all.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am really happy to welcome a very familiar face up in the gallery. Victoria Hunt from OECTA is here. This is Vic's last week with OECTA and this is her last question period, unless she wants to come again tomorrow. Vic retires on Friday after 20 years of supporting public education. She's been a really strong and effective advocate.

You've been a real joy to work with, Vicky. Thank you so much for all you have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Congratulations, Vic.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome my new friend Vicky Bismilla to Queen's Park this morning. Welcome, Vicky.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome Elliot Zolf, a grade 10 student who is shadowing me today, from Forest Hill Collegiate in Toronto. Elliot, old-timers like the member from Windsor–Tecumseh would know, is the great-nephew of Larry Zolf.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a number of students from a high school in my great riding of Davenport. From St. Mary Catholic Academy, I want to welcome the students who are joining us here at Queen's Park today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome one of my constituents from the wonderful riding of Hamilton Mountain, Deanna Allain. She is a fantastic advocate for service dogs. She has her service dog with her today in training, Carlin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, Eric Pegolo, now with the Lung Association, a long-time staffer of mine until very recently.

Ms. Catherine Fife: On behalf of the member from Welland, I'd like to welcome page Allan Buri; his mother, Sharon Saxon-Buri; and his grandmother, Linda Saxon. They're in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to welcome the family of our page captain Isabelle Funk. Her mother, Elisha Funk, and her grandmother, Mari Lauzon, are with us today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have friends that are going to be joining me momentarily in the Chamber. I'd like to welcome Anne Wolf and Keith Blackwell from Strathroy to the Chamber today.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great honour to welcome Dr. Geoffrey Hinton, regarded as one of the fathers of artificial intelligence; indeed, he is the father of deep learning. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Geoffrey Hinton.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to introduce two very hard-working public servants from our MTO provincial highways management department in the east gallery: Janet Leader and Shawn Nickerson.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: From OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, we have Tommi-Lee Gauthier, Antonio Brieva, Palmer Lockridge, Alexandra Burse, Chucky Ibe and Landon Tulk from Western University. Welcome, all. It's always great to have OUSA here in the Legislature.

HIGHWAY DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence for all those who have died recently in accidents along the 401 highway, especially those in Carnage Alley: namely Gary Lent from Etobicoke, the Brundritt family from Amherstburg, Sarah and Freya Payne from London, Marc Lafontaine from Windsor and Alyssa Smulders, also from Windsor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence for those that were killed on the stretch of Highway 401. Do we agree? Agreed.

I'd ask everyone, if they can, to please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): God rest their souls.

It is therefore now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy. The People's Guarantee lays out Patrick Brown and the PCs' plan for hydro in Ontario. Under Premier Wynne and the Liberals, we know that hydro rates have tripled. In fact, families are paying on average \$1,000 more a year than when the Liberal government was first elected back in 2003.

The People's Guarantee is a plan to get hydro back on track. It provides an additional 12% off hydro bills. That means the average household will save \$173 per year on their hydro bill under Patrick Brown and the Ontario PCs. Mr. Speaker, isn't that a plan that even the Liberals can get behind?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's becoming quite clear that the PCs and their leader can't be trusted. They've now decided to say anything to anybody to make sure that they can get elected. Months after trying to deny our 25% reduction on bills for families and as many as half a million small businesses and farms by voting against our fair hydro plan, they're now sneakily including it in their own platform. Worse than that, that claim about further reducing rates is reckless and only opens up an even larger hole in their already gaping fiscal plan.

I believe the proof is in the fine print at the back of their platform: over \$12 billion in cuts. This includes over \$6 billion of across-the-board unspecified cuts and, of course, shifting conservation program costs from taxpayers, again making sure their fiscal hole continues to grow. We've acted to support—

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

1040

Mr. Todd Smith: More Liberal spin. They're just hoping something actually sticks, but it's not.

Just look at what our leader said this morning. He wanted you to consider this: Premier Wynne and the Liberals accepted \$1.3 million in donations from companies that received the biggest contracts for energy that we don't need any longer in Ontario. That meant these insider contracts resulted in families overpaying on their electricity bills by \$9.2 billion. That's the biggest reason why our electricity bills are skyrocketing. Then, to make matters worse, the Wynne Liberals sold off Hydro One. It was a fire sale to reward her donors, insiders and fat-cat friends. That's why this government can't be trusted after 14 long years.

Mr. Speaker, I do wonder, when did the Liberals decide they were going to be for the insiders and not for the people who are paying the hydro bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It makes you wonder who is defending families. It's this side of the House that is actually defending families. We brought forward a 25% reduction that all families are seeing, but it begs the question because, under their plan, costs are going to rise.

Let's look at their carbon tax. The truth is that under their carbon tax scheme, you'll pay more and get less. Independent expert analysis from the C.D. Howe Institute, for example, confirms this, showing their carbon tax would add \$1,200 in annual costs per family, and this is more than any of the tax cuts the Conservatives claim to be offering as well. The National Post has called it a "shell game," noting that any tax cut will be paid for by an 81% increase in the existing provincial tax on gasoline.

When it comes to energy, it is this government that has brought forward serious reductions for families right across this province.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the minister would rather talk about cap-and-trade than talk about hydro, because their record over the last 13 years is repugnant when it comes to the hydro plan.

Our electricity plan, our hydro plan, unlike the Liberals, isn't a risky borrowing scheme. We're not going to spend billions of dollars in interest just to get through the next election. Our plan, the People's Guarantee, offers real, lasting relief for the people of Ontario on their hydro bills. Twelve per cent more off hydro bills is the People's Guarantee. We think families in Ontario deserve that after paying the fastest-rising rates in North America, thanks to this government.

Mr. Speaker, don't the Liberals realize Ontario deserves long-lasting hydro relief?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The only thing that party is guaranteeing is that everything is going to go up in Ontario. That's their guarantee. They're even talking about our fair hydro plan, the 25% that we brought forward and they voted against. They talk about it all the time, but they have nothing that is going to do anything

that will actually help the families the way we have done on this side of the House.

And given the gap that we know is in their plan, we know across-the-board cuts are coming, just like the Harris years, putting both existing and future programs at risk. We already know investments like the \$300 million in home and school retrofits and the \$575 million in social housing repairs will be scrapped once the Conservatives drop cap-and-trade and create a more expensive carbon tax.

But what else, Mr. Speaker? Are they going to cancel the OESP program? Are they going to cancel the First Nations delivery credit? Are they going to make sure they eliminate the \$100-million Affordability Fund?

Mr. Speaker, all they know how to do is cut.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. All sides, both sides—all three parties have indicated they cannot control themselves. I'll get it. We're in warnings.

New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Todd Smith: We'll try this again with the Minister of Energy today. The People's Guarantee lays out an additional 12% off families' hydro bills, but it doesn't stop there. It will rein in ridiculous executive salaries, like the ones at Hydro One. We know the Liberals won't, because they're the ones who signed the contracts in the first place for \$4.5 million for the CEO at Hydro One. Mr. Speaker, the PCs will rein in the \$4.5-million salaries that the Liberals are doling out. Will the Liberals keep handing out millions in salaries that Ontarians can't afford?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The Liberal government will continue to act on behalf of the people of Ontario and keep electricity as affordable as possible, as clean as possible and as reliable as possible, unlike the opposition, which has a plan to rip up contracts that are signed. You know what, Mr. Speaker? At the end of the day, that really makes this province a banana republic, so it actually makes you think about what they've done when they're putting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins-James Bay is warned and the member from Oxford is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, it begs the question: What are they going to continue to cut? I've talked about \$575 million for social housing repairs. Are they going to cut the Ontario Electricity Support Program? Are they going to cut the RRRP, which helps hundreds of thousands of people right across our province, especially in rural and northern parts of the province?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The members of the Liberal government keep fabricating these tales. They're just not believable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unacceptable. Withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, they're making it up as they go along. It's a word that starts with "L" and ends with "S." They cannot continue to do this. They can't continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw. And if he does it again, I'll warn him.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, sir. Withdraw. I was referring to "Liberals," Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not accepting a challenge to the Chair when I make a ruling. It will not happen again, or I'll name you.

Carry on.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. The \$4.5-million salaries are the legacy of this Liberal government in Ontario. They're the reason—one of the reasons; one of the many reasons—why Ontario has astronomical hydro prices. Do the Liberals not think Ontario needs long-lasting relief on their hydro bills, instead of their cynical borrowing scheme?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: A 25% reduction is something that we've seen in this province over the last few months that they voted against. When you're wanting to talk about how we're helping families, this is significant savings for families.

But it also begs the question as to how they're going to explain the \$12 billion in cuts. Or what about the \$1,200 that families will see in annual costs thanks to their carbon tax scheme? That is more—that is absolutely more—than any tax cut that they're proposing or even to be offering. Unlike our cap-and-trade on greenhouse gas pollution from business, their carbon tax would not ensure that emissions would be reduced either. The Conservatives are also hiding the fact that they cut over \$6 billion in green projects that help fight climate change. The important thing about energy and the environment is that these two work hand in hand.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Again, I'm talking about electricity prices in Ontario, and the minister just doesn't understand or he wants to talk about something else. But if he wants to talk about cap-and-trade, we will keep hundreds of millions of dollars from leaving Ontario for Hollywood, California and Quebec City, Quebec, keeping that money here in Ontario to provide tax relief in this province instead of sending money elsewhere.

The government's own internal documents and the Auditor General have confirmed that if the Wynne Liberals are re-elected, Ontario's electricity rates are going to skyrocket to the highest that they've ever been. They can't be trusted, Speaker. That's why the People's Guarantee is a plan for long-lasting hydro relief here in Ontario.

The question is simple this morning: Why doesn't the government support real, long-lasting relief for Ontario electricity customers?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Long-lasting relief was brought to the people of Ontario—and they voted against it. Their record shows that they could care less about making sure that the people of Ontario actually get a break, and actually worry about making sure that they can put out a glossy magazine that people will recycle as quickly as they will when they read it.

We're making sure that we're helping families with a 25% reduction. We're making sure we're helping our First Nations individuals. We're making sure that we help our individuals who live in northern or rural parts of our province.

1050

We know that the fine print in the back of their document talks about \$12 billion in cuts. This includes over \$6 billion of across-the-board, unspecified cuts. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Thousands of teachers being fired? Thousands of registered nurses without a job? That's what their legacy is. On this side of the House, our legacy is building this province up.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Acting Premier why the privatized Hydro One is trying to skirt the ban on wintertime hydro disconnections with their proposal to have families install prepay meters. The minister responded by saying that that isn't Hydro One's intention. But families and businesses struggling to keep up with their soaring hydro bills can't afford for Hydro One to have a change of heart. They need a guarantee that prepay meters will not be coming to Ontario.

Will the Acting Premier commit today to giving people the peace of mind that they deserve and ban the use of prepay hydro meters in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I don't know how much more clear I can be. Maybe the members of the third party need to take their ideological earplugs out, Mr. Speaker, because last week the member for Toronto–Danforth and the VP of customer care at Hydro One both participated in an interview on the radio. In that interview, Hydro One was very clear when they said that none of this will be forced onto any customer. If, in fact, we are to proceed with this technology, we will still need to develop and test—

Interjection.

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

Finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It will be at the customer's discretion. So I'll remind the third party one more time: Any technology that electricity utility companies introduce must abide by the winter disconnection laws. Additionally, it was Hydro One that was the first to voluntari-

ly end winter disconnections with their winter relief program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the clarity that the people of Ontario need is a full-out ban on prepaid hydro meters. That's the clarity that they deserve.

The minister also said yesterday that the OEB has turned down proposals like this before because the OEB is in the business of protecting ratepayers. I'd like to remind this Liberal government and the minister in particular that looking out for ratepayers is actually—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity-Spadina is warned.

I'm sorry. Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to remind this government, this Liberal government, and the minister in particular, that looking out for ratepayers is actually the responsibility, the job, of the government, not the OEB. When will the government do its job, stand up for the people of Ontario and put a complete ban on the implementation of prepay hydro meters in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's this government that stands up and brings forward an affordability plan through the fair hydro plan to actually help ratepayers, and that party votes against it. We bring forward a plan that actually helps First Nations individuals living on-reserve by eliminating their delivery charge; it's that party that votes against it. We bring forward a plan that increases the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which helps low-income individuals; it's that party that votes against it, Mr. Speaker.

The OEB has a mandate to make sure that they protect ratepayers, and it's this government that has done that. Besides the fact that they vote against everything we do to actually protect ratepayers, when you look, at the end of the day, what the OEB is doing is reviewing the application. There is no prepaid meter coming to Ontario. It is actually not even being considered right now. It is being reviewed.

At the end of the day, Hydro One has said this would be an opt-in program if—if, Mr. Speaker—this was to happen.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, this Liberal government seems quite comfortable leaving the fate of Ontario families and businesses up to the private, for-profit Hydro One. But this company has already shown very clearly that it does not have the best interests of Ontarians at heart. It has applied for numerous rate increases. It has invested in a dirty, coal-burning American energy company instead of our own power grid. Now it desperately wants to get around a ban on winter-time hydro disconnections.

When will this Liberal government admit that the privatization experiment has failed, stand up for Ontario families and businesses, and begin to undo the damage done by decades of Conservative and Liberal sell-offs by bringing Hydro One back into public hands?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, the law states that there can be no winter disconnections. This proposed idea in the application brought forward by Hydro One wouldn't be able to circumvent that. That would not be able to happen. That was said by Hydro One in a radio interview that the member from Toronto-Danforth was participating in. LDCs know they can't circumvent the law.

When looking at the prepaid program—this is being reviewed right now by the OEB. If and when the OEB makes a decision—and they have a history of actually defending the ratepayer and making sure that they significantly reduce applications brought forward by any LDC. They have the ratepayers' interests at heart. This would be an opt-in program—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. The Liberals and Conservatives like to privatize things. They did it with electricity, and now they're doing it with health care. Thanks to both of these parties, there are over 1,000 for-profit private clinics operating in Ontario today. Now the Premier's health care privatization bill will open the door even wider for private health care in Ontario when we already know, just by looking to our neighbours in the south, that privatized health care doesn't work for the vast majority of people.

The NDP has an amendment to this omnibus bill that will ensure that any new health care facilities that open as a result of these changes will be not-for-profit. If the Acting Premier and this Liberal government are serious about making sure there is no more private health care in Ontario, they should commit to passing the NDP amendment in committee. Will the Acting Premier commit to doing that right now?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud of the legislation, which we're actually going through clause-by-clause in committee right now this week. It provides a number of accountability measures, enhancing the oversight, the supervision, the transparency and the accountability of many of those health activities that take place outside of our hospitals.

Private hospitals are one category of that because way back in 1931, there was an act created called the Private Hospitals Act. The intent through this legislation is to repeal that act, to end it, to delete it and get rid of it.

From long before any Liberal government, we currently have six grandfathered private hospitals that reside within that act. This legislation, as we go forward, is

going to transition those existing grandfathered private hospitals into a better regime of oversight, accountability and transparency. I think we all can appreciate the value of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians don't believe that a person's health should depend on how much money they have. Dr. Doris Grinspun, CEO of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, says, "We are very concerned with schedule 9, which will effectively lift the ban on the creation of private hospitals in Ontario. Thus, we oppose the repeal of the Private Hospitals Act and the Independent Health Facilities Act and ask for the complete withdrawal of schedule 9."

The NDP has another amendment to Bill 160 that would do exactly this: remove schedule 9 from the bill entirely to ensure that no private for-profit hospitals open in Ontario. Is this Liberal government planning to act on their own rhetoric and vote for the NDP amendment in committee so that Ontario families can actually rest assured that they will never, ever have to pay out of pocket for hospital services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're absolutely committed, as a Liberal government, to ending the presence of private hospitals in this province. There are six grandfathered. We're transitioning—I don't know if the leader of the third party is suggesting that by deleting schedule 9, those hospitals will not have a regulatory or oversight accountability regime that applies to them.

1100

What this legislation, in schedule 9, does is it addresses those existing gaps in oversight; it strengthens enforcement and accountability. I can't imagine that the leader of the third party is suggesting that we leave those entities without oversight, without accountability, without transparency to Ontarians.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is such important legislation that, in addition to the fact that we have effectively had a ban on the creation of any new private hospitals in this province for a long time, we're getting rid of an almost 100-year piece of legislation and increasing accountability.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's shocking that the Minister of Health is basically saying that the CEO of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario is wrong. I'm shocked. I'm surprised. They usually are quite well-informed.

Elisabeth Ballerman of the National Union of Public and General Employees says this of the Liberal health care privatization omnibus bill: "Adding a for-profit angle to health care in Ontario is not only wrong, it's dangerous.... Privatization of our health care system leaves Ontarians vulnerable to a number of risks, not only to their health but to their overall well-being." Dangerous is how experts are describing this latest Liberal privatization scheme.

Has the Liberal government learned nothing from the disastrous Hydro One sell-off, or will the Acting Premier

push ahead with health care privatization and force Ontario families to pay the price?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're doing the opposite of what the leader of the third party is suggesting; we're actually ending private hospitals.

I have to give credit to the Ontario Health Coalition. We've been working closely with them, including with their legal team, over the past week to make sure we could be absolutely crystal clear and that any future governments would not have the ability to create private hospitals unless they were to come back into this legislation and amend the legislation.

We want to rid this province of private hospitals, but acknowledge that there are six that were grandfathered that are providing services to Ontario. We need to, however, move them into a regime of full accountability, transparency and oversight by the Ministry of Health. I think if the member opposite were to speak with the Ontario Health Coalition and were to speak with RNAO, particularly once this legislation is passed, they will be satisfied that our intent is equal to theirs.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the government House leader. The level of the government's debate over the last few days has been appalling and probably embarrassing for them. They've been reduced to being talking-point robots, spoon-fed nonsense from their Liberal research bureau. You can't trust a word they say. Nothing that comes out of their mouths has any credibility.

I want you to look at the history. The Ottawa Citizen wrote that the "Liberals ... are declaring themselves the champions of facts," but in reality "the Ontario Liberals are making things worse" as "we get dubious political spin dressed up as fact-checking."

We all remember the Bob Probert incident, when the Minister of Energy had to issue an apology to Troy Crowder because the Liberal research services couldn't even fact-check a hockey fight. That's the kind of team that's feeding this government the utter nonsense and malarkey that we're hearing from them.

So, Speaker, my question: As the leader of the government—

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, thank you very much, Speaker, for the question from the member opposite. I think that when we speak about the deep, hidden cuts in their glossy magazine platform, that is talking about facts. When we talk about the fact that right there on page 76 of their glossy magazine there are \$12 billion worth of cuts, asking the opposition—asking the Conservatives and Patrick Brown—to explain to Ontarians what services and what programs they're going to cut is not wasting time. I think Ontarians deserve to know what services and what programs the PC Party and Patrick Brown are going to cut, because on this side of the House, we're committed to—

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

A reminder to the member, and all members, that you refer to somebody either by their title or by their riding, and I hope it stays that way.

Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the government House leader, who has acquiesced to Liberal research services that can't fact-check their way out of a wet paper bag.

I'm going to give him some more highlights. The Toronto Star wrote, "Liberals Mocked Over 'Frisolous' Complaint That Tories, NDP Are Breaking Fundraising Law."

Let's not forget about the time the Liberal research bureau got the two downtown Toronto venues mixed up. The Ottawa Citizen wrote about it, saying, "Crying sexism without having done their research reveals something about them..." The Sun summarized it by asking, "Is There a Twit Club?"

Then there was a TVO reporter who—I can't even say what he said because it's unparliamentary language.

Again, back to the government House leader: Are you going to take back control from the Liberal researchers? Are you going to take it back and bring facts back to this government's House, or are you going to continue to lower the debate in this House?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, \$12 billion worth of deep cuts is what Patrick Brown and the Conservatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will correct.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Sorry; \$12 billion worth of deep cuts is what the Conservatives and their leader are guaranteeing to the people of Ontario, and that is not acceptable to us. Under their plan, Ontarians will pay more and will get less. They're going to cut \$6 billion worth of programs that will ensure our hospitals are more energy-efficient and that our schools are more energy-efficient and are good places for our children to study. They will cut all environmental programming so that we can't really tackle the issue of climate change. In fact, they're going to bring a carbon tax that is going to cost people more money.

That's not the kind of People's Guarantee we need from the opposition. They need to explain to Ontarians what their \$12-billion cuts are.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, Chief Fobister and members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation travelled here with a simple request. Will this Liberal government build a mercury poisoning treatment centre in Grassy Narrows so that the sick and dying can get care without being separated from their loved ones?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question.

Speaker, I can tell you today that this morning there was a very productive and effective meeting with Minister Philpott, with Chief Paishk, with Chief Fobister, with myself and various advisers representing the chiefs, the federal government and the province of Ontario. I'm quoting Minister Philpott at that meeting this morning. She said, "We have turned a page on these issues"—that is the mercury issues. That was met by a round of applause from all of those at this morning's meeting.

Our technical staff is continuing with the meeting as I speak, and I can tell you, Speaker, that later today there will be further details released. It was very productive. The issue has been advanced in a good way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: The people of Grassy Narrows can't wait any longer to have the mercury cleaned up from the English River system. They can't wait any longer for a mercury poisoning treatment centre in their community.

Why not green-light this project today, send a construction crew to Grassy Narrows this week and just get the job done?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I've said, we had a very productive meeting this morning on a host of issues.

As I've said previously in this House with regard to the cleanup of the English-Wabigoon River system, we have provided \$5.2 million to do the remediation work-up. That's a study that will look into how the remediation should be done. In addition to that, we have provided \$85 million for actual work on the remediation after the remediation workup has been done. We are serious about dealing with these issues in the English-Wabigoon River system. We recognize that something has to be done and will be done on the cleanup.

In addition to that, we had this meeting this morning on other issues. There will be more details later today. But it was a good meeting.

1110

LUNG DISEASE

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We know that lung disease affects millions of Ontarians, not just the 2.4 million who live with a chronic respiratory illness, but also the millions more who deserve to breathe with ease. Our government has been taking action to promote lung health and prevent lung disease.

Last year, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, which helps smokers quit, protects people from exposure to second-hand smoke and works to protect the health of children and youth. As a result of these efforts, we have decreased the smoking rate from 20.9% in 2005 to 17.4%, about 480,000 less.

Can the minister please explain what other steps our government is taking to improve lung health for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for the question. If I may, I'd like to take a moment first to recognize the tremendous work the member has done to advocate for better lung health in Ontario. We can all breathe easier because of the hard work done by the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. With the help of the Ontario Lung Association, he has been a crucial part of the establishment of the new Ontario lung health consultation group.

This group will consist of health experts, persons with lived experience, caregivers, advocates and more, and they'll provide my ministry with advice and recommendations on research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease and for the development of an Ontario lung health action plan. Through this collaboration, I'm confident that we'll be successful in protecting and caring for the millions of Ontarians who live with a lung disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Minister. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a minute to acknowledge with gratitude the member from Cambridge, who spearheaded this initiative.

I know that this group will create a plan that will ensure we are providing a coordinated approach to prevent lung disease, improve patient outcomes and reduce health care spending. Our government recognizes that those who live with chronic lung disease have real challenges, as well as their families, who rightfully deserve a plan that will ensure less people suffer the loss of a loved one to lung disease. We're confident that this group will help to achieve just that, working with our wonderful partners from the Ontario Lung Association.

Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please share with us what else this government is doing to promote lung health in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again to the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for that question. This summer, in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario, we launched a new screening pilot for people at risk of getting lung cancer. The pilot ensures that we're doing our best to organize lung cancer screening for people at high risk across this province. In fact, the pilot sites are based out of the Ottawa Hospital, the Renfrew Victoria Hospital, Health Sciences North in Sudbury and Lakeridge Health in Oshawa.

We also have a number of existing programs that address COPD or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and other lung diseases. Of course, we'll also, starting January 1, be providing absolutely free asthma inhalers, those puffers of steroids and Ventolin, to children and youth through OHIP+. I'm confident, with the member's continued advocacy and the member from Cambridge and our partnership with the lung association,

that we'll be able to achieve much, much more for the lung health of Ontarians.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the finance minister. Earlier this week, Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown announced an important plank in the People's Guarantee. He announced that an Ontario Progressive Conservative government will introduce a new Ontario child care refund for up to 75% of child care expenses or up to \$6,750 per child. That is real change—real change that would make life affordable for Ontario families.

Can the minister explain why he doesn't support much-needed relief—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Etobicoke North is warned.

You may finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm fine.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question.

Of course, we all want relief for Ontario families. The member opposite and her party are not doing that. It's quoted time and time again this week that their plan doesn't add up, and that's coming from their own expert advisers. The fine print on the last page of their report makes it clear that they have \$12 billion in cuts, and the question remains: What are you going to cut? Which hospitals are you going to cut?

I recall that there was another five-point plan from Mike Harris. Where did that take him? Well, let me see: His five-point plan said he would not negatively impact classroom education; we know he created a crisis. He said he would not close down hospitals; instead, he closed down dozens of hospitals, fired nurses and brought the system to its knees. What are you guys going to cut?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got to do my job. Stop the clock.

I am going to remind—it's delicate. I do want in the House everyone to use their title or their riding, and I'm going to suggest that you indicate your leader and then his name, please.

Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We're going to cut an economic development minister who lost 330,000 manufacturing jobs. We're going to cut a Minister of Infrastructure who doesn't know how to roll out infrastructure. We're going to cut a Minister of Health who lets patients stay on hospital floors. We're going to cut a Deputy Premier who allowed the longest college strike in Ontario history. We're going to cut a finance minister who had to save his own seat by cancelling \$1.2 billion in gas plants. We're going to cut a Treasury Board president who has to fight with the Auditor General all the time. We're going to cut

a transportation minister who built an upside down bridge.

Interjections.

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

First, when I stand, you sit. Second, the Minister of Agriculture is warned. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Here's what I suspect they're going to cut, because they voted against these very measures in the past: They're going to cut OSAP and free tuition for students. They're going to cut OHIP+, free pharmacare for those under 25. They're going to cut \$16 billion in infrastructure to schools this year alone, \$20 billion for hospitals, \$190 billion over the next 13 years for roads and bridges, and the list goes on, because they voted against these very measures.

Furthermore, the National Post, another favourite of theirs, says it's all a shell game for middle-class-income earners. They're going to have an 81% increase in gas taxes for the people of Ontario, costing them more money.

Furthermore, they're going to go into deficit. They can't even balance their books when they're making all these cuts and all these revenue increases. It's fiscally irresponsible, and a social deficit as much as the fiscal deficit that they're providing.

Interjections.

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

New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question to the Acting Premier: With Bill 166, this Liberal government told the public that they wanted to protect fans who bought tickets to concerts and sporting events. One of the ways this government can protect fans is by revealing how many tickets actually go on sale to the public and how many are just giveaways to VIPs or just resold at higher prices. If venues publish this information, then consumers would know when they are being gouged.

During the debate on Bill 166, the Attorney General said, "99% were in favour of at least some additional transparency requirements," yet last week, we found out that the Liberals removed that section of the consumer protection from their own bill.

Mr. Speaker, will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians: Who pressured the Premier to abandon protecting consumers who just want to buy tickets to concerts and sporting events?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Attorney General.

1120

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for asking a very important question. Speaker, as you know, we have brought in a piece of legislation that is working through this House and really will ensure that we put fans first when it comes to sporting events, concerts etc. We have heard very clearly from Ontarians that they want to

ensure that they get tickets at an affordable price and that they have a fair shot at getting tickets. That's why the proposals before this House would put a ban on these computer bots and would ensure that people will not be able to sell tickets that were bought by bots.

We're also taking the financial incentive away from bots by making sure that we're putting a cap of 50% on resale prices so that Ontarians do have access to affordable tickets.

There are very robust enforcement measures and transparency requirements that I will speak to in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Acting Premier: We've heard numerous complaints that venues are holding back a massive amount of tickets, which means that only a small fraction ever go on sale at face value. That means that when parents save enough money to take their kids to a Jays game, an Argos game or a Leafs game, they only have a small opportunity to buy tickets at a fair price. Most times, they have to choose between paying highly inflated prices for tickets from scalpers or letting their kids down.

This Liberal government says that it's committed to transparency and protecting consumers who want to see shows or attend sporting events. If that's the case, why are the Liberals backtracking on this important issue of consumer protection and letting down those people who just want to take their kids and their grandkids to sporting events?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really happy to hear that the member opposite is interested in this issue that we have shown leadership in addressing.

Transparency is a very big part of it. In fact, one of the big things we're doing in this legislation is that we're ensuring there's all-in pricing, so that consumers—fans—know exactly what they are paying for.

We also talked to a lot of artists. We wanted to make sure there were no unintended consequences to this legislation. The amendment that we have proposed deals exactly with that. We want to make sure that we have a robust arts and culture scene all across Ontario, not just in Toronto. One of the concerns that was raised to us, which is legitimate, was that some of the requirements that were initially proposed may result in artists not coming to smaller regional markets like Niagara—the member's riding—or Ottawa, Kingston or Windsor. We want to make sure that our arts and culture community is thriving in all parts of the province, that these big acts come to our smaller markets and that our rules don't cause a detriment.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Our government has been running a \$20-million pilot in 22 communities across the province to increase affordable housing options for survivors of domestic violence and their families. The portable hous-

ing benefit provides families with the freedom to choose where they live since the subsidy isn't tied to a specific unit, like most rent-g geared-to-income housing.

The two-year pilot project for the portable housing benefit was launched in September 2016 in 22 regions throughout Ontario. The portable housing benefit has been an important program for helping survivors find stability and housing. Could the minister update the House on the announcement that he made yesterday?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member from Barrie for the question and also for her advocacy on behalf of vulnerable Ontarians.

We've been doing very important work to help survivors and their families escape violence by providing them with a flexible, portable housing benefit. That's why I was happy to announce yesterday that after a successful pilot, we're expanding the portable housing benefit right across Ontario.

We will be expanding the program to include victims of human trafficking. I was also happy to announce that these survivors of human trafficking will receive special priority access to social housing, as victims of domestic violence do now.

We're dedicated to making this program better to provide easier access to make it more inclusive. This expanded benefit is providing \$30 million over three years to support 3,000 survivors and will increase to \$50 million a year in 2020. It's going to provide housing when and where—

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Again to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy: Earlier this year, the Ministry of Housing introduced its new Fair Housing Plan. This plan includes 16 comprehensive measures to help Ontarians find a safe, suitable and affordable place to call home. The plan is helping people find affordable homes, increase supply, protect buyers and renters, and bring stability to the real estate market.

I understand that the minister made an announcement this morning about the Fair Housing Plan and how he is working to encourage the creation of new, purpose-built rental in Ontario. Could the minister please update the House on this announcement?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I was very pleased to be able to announce this morning a key part of our Fair Housing Plan. In some places in this province, it's very hard to find suitable affordable housing, especially for those who want to rent. We're seeing condo buildings pop up on every corner, but not quite so many rental developments are being built.

This morning I was pleased to announce that Ontario is making it easier for people to find a place to call home by helping incentivize the construction of more rental housing in communities where many people rent, but rentals are hard to find. We will encourage developers to build new rental housing by rebating development charges.

We'll continue to work on ways to increase the supply of housing in Ontario. This builds on the other initiatives in our Fair Housing Plan that are creating more rental housing and more affordable housing across the province.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Attorney General. Victim Services of Renfrew County does a tremendous job in assisting and working with victims of crime to help them through their terrible circumstances. But we have a problem here, Minister. Legislative changes that have vastly increased their workload by over 700%, coupled with the fact that they've had no meaningful funding increase in the past five years, put them on the brink of being unable to provide the services so badly needed in Renfrew county and, indeed, all across Ontario.

I have written to the minister about this in the past and have made it clear that without an increase in funding, victims of crimes are at a greater risk than ever before. Will the minister commit to funding victim services to the level necessary to comply with the mandate that he has given them?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for asking the question. He has written to me and he has spoken to me about this very important issue as well.

I want to be very clear that our government is very much committed to helping victims of crime when they need it most. Since 2003, the Ministry of the Attorney General has invested over \$1 billion in vital services to support those who have been harmed by crime.

As part of our government's strategy to end human trafficking, we will be investing \$1.93 million over four years to expand the benefits available under the Victim Quick Response Program to better serve victims of human trafficking.

We are also investing \$6.65 million over four years to enhance the Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario Program, so that our community-based service delivery partners can provide better supports and case coordination for victims of human trafficking.

Further, as part of the government's sexual violence and harassment action plan, in 2015, we increased funding to sexual assault centres by \$1.75 million per year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: Thank you very much. There's a lot of numbers there, Speaker, but victims of crime are still being left unserved.

The minister knows that the funding formula that Victim Services rely on is incoherent at best, inconsistent and full of boutique envelopes. This part is not complicated. Even though Victim Services is largely volunteer based, if the funding is not there, they can't provide the services that are needed by the people.

Along with the exponentially growing caseload, they are now faced with the cost implications of Bill 148,

leaving them in an even more threatened financial position. Can I count on the minister today to ensure that Victim Services of Renfrew County will receive the funding it requires to provide the services that victims of crime so badly need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We very much recognize the hard work that Victim Services do in Lanark county and across the province. That's why, as we are introducing these very important programs, on the urging of a lot of these victim services groups, like human trafficking and to end sexual violence against women, we're making sure that there is funding available to go with it, because we recognize that there is going to be an extra workload.

1130

We're also doing work right now with indigenous victims. There's work happening on gender-based violence to make sure there are more appropriate supports available for victims.

I also want to highlight, though, that the member has got to be careful, because one of the things he's guaranteeing the people of Lanark and the people of Ontario is a \$12-billion cut in essential services. Is he saying that he's going to take away \$1 billion worth of victims' services as a result of their People's Guarantee? Speaker, I hope that is not the case, because that is going to be a major setback for these organizations and for the services they provide.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Paramedics in Waterloo region are struggling. Because of offloading delays at local hospitals, ambulances are taken off the road as paramedics wait for their patients to be transferred. This year, the Waterloo region paramedic service has seen a rise in both code yellows, where there are three or fewer local ambulances on the road, and code reds, where there are no local ambulances on the road—none.

Ambulances are essential to our health care system. Without them, people in crisis lose access to the care they need. It shouldn't take a person's death, like in Hamilton, for the government to start taking these shortages seriously. What will the government do to ensure that there are no more code reds in Waterloo region?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the three city of Waterloo hospitals are all participating in the dedicated offload nurse program that the ministry initiated and has been implementing for a number of years. It provides additional resources directly to ERs through nursing support so that they can assist with and expedite those offloading challenges that may take place in hospitals around the province.

It's important that Ontarians understand, because this is such vital funding, that 100% of that funding to support offloading is provided by the government through the Ministry of Health. It's funded through the city. The

city of Waterloo receives the funding from us, but it is 100% provided by the government, and I'm happy to talk specifically about the performance of Waterloo in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ambulance response times have slightly improved in Waterloo region, but increasingly these calls are taking longer because of offloading delays at the local hospitals. The average for ambulance days lost to offload delays has increased by 167% compared to October 2016.

Waterloo region paramedic services have asked the government to provide enhanced funding for offload nurses in the region. According to their interim report, provincial funding for the offload nurse program has not kept pace with the increase in patient volumes and, in fact, has marginally decreased.

Ontario families deserve more than an underfunded health care system that lurches from crisis to crisis. Will the government commit today to provide Waterloo region with the funding they need for the dedicated offload nurses?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our funding for offload nurses province-wide has increased, actually, by 64% since 2011-12, so in the last five years a 64% increase.

But I think it's important that those who rely on the Waterloo hospitals understand that those three hospitals in the city of Waterloo have above-average provincial emergency department patient flow and above-average provincial ambulance patient flow, resulting in higher ambulance offload times. In fact, the ambulance offload time ranking of hospitals based on a 90th percentile from highest to lowest: Grand River Hospital and Cambridge Memorial Hospital are ranked 12th and 17th respectively out of 123 EDs in Ontario.

So I want to congratulate the hospitals in the city of Waterloo, because notwithstanding the argument made by the member opposite, they are performing exceedingly well, and we're remunerating them directly to do that.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle.

As a former dean, I know how important post-secondary is, but I also know about the financial barriers that many students face when they try to access post-secondary education. I know the minister firmly believes that the decision of whether to obtain a post-secondary education should be based on students' ability to learn and not their ability to pay.

Des études postsecondaires abordables, c'est important pour les étudiants, mais c'est aussi important pour notre économie.

In the new economy, we know that probably seven out of 10 new jobs will require a post-secondary education. So access to a high-quality post-secondary education is

important to the economy as well as to the students. Can the minister explain what she's doing about this problem?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say thank you to the member opposite for her passion about post-secondary education. Speaker, the transformation of OSAP has been a resounding success. We've had 50,000 more students apply this year than at the same time last year. Over 200,000 students in this province are getting free tuition, and another third of our students are getting help with their tuition and their living costs. It is tremendous. Almost all the students who receive OSAP receive grants that they will not have to repay.

We are absolutely committed to making sure that every student in this province has the ability to learn, because our economy depends on it. As the member opposite has said, our future economy depends on a well-educated workforce, and we're doing a very good job of getting there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci à la ministre, et puis I want to thank her for the great legacy that the transformation of OSAP is for our province.

I had the pleasure this morning of meeting with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. I know that it's not only tuition that is difficult for them; there are other costs that they have to face. Tuition is not the only cost of post-secondary education. The very real concern that they brought to me is the price of textbooks. Textbooks are certainly an important tool of learning, but their cost is often burdensome for students. I think it is important that we address these costs fully.

Can the minister explain what action the government is taking to increase fairness and opportunity in Ontario, because we want to assist students with their non-tuition costs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am really delighted to talk to the House about eCampusOntario. I urge anyone who's getting a little bored with the proceedings here to go online to eCampusOntario: 227 different textbooks are available not just to students but to the general public as well. So 227 titles—we are looking at expanding that number. We've invested another \$1 million so that more textbooks can be added to this library. This means real savings for students. These textbooks can cost hundreds of dollars—so real savings. It's far more convenient to be able to access open educational resources.

We applaud OUSA for pushing us on this issue. They've been tremendous advocates. They did it on free tuition. They're doing it again on free textbooks.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Earlier this morning, we heard the names of several of those who lost their lives on the 401's Carnage Alley.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question, please?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This is directed to the Minister of Transportation. Thank you.

Now, the Premier made a promise to this House to build a barrier. Everyone understood her to mean a concrete median barrier. But then the Premier began walking the promise back. The transport minister then said that he was looking into high-tension cables. That's not good for small cars and motorcycles—decapitation—and large trucks would just simply plow right through them.

Now, Speaker, winter is coming. That stretch from Queen's Line to Kent Road 15 in my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex is extremely hazardous. Sports will inevitably cross over the grass median and end up in the ditch in the opposite direction. Road construction is currently taking place there right now. My constituents are demanding a concrete barrier, not a cable barrier.

I've organized a town hall meeting in my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex Thursday evening. My question to the minister is simply this: Will you attend?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I thank the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex not only for the question today—he and I have had the opportunity to go back and forth on this very precise topic here in this Legislature, in this chamber, during question period. We've also had the opportunity to speak about this a number of times one-on-one. Frankly, he was good enough to arrange for some of his constituents to come here to Queen's Park to meet with myself and some of our officials to talk about this very issue, so I do respect the fact that the member has asked the question today and the fact that he has also organized a town hall meeting for, I believe, tomorrow evening, back in his community.

As I mentioned to the member, there will be officials from the Ministry of Transportation who will be attending the town hall tomorrow evening. I've also assured that member and his constituents that I take the issue of road and highway safety extremely seriously. It's why we've passed legislation with respect to this. It's why we're happy to keep the conversation going. Frankly, Speaker, it's also why, following the meeting with his constituents, I did ask the ministry to go back and do additional analytical work on the requests coming forward from that member and from people in his community, and I'd be happy to provide additional—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary? Oh, that was it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It was so quiet, I decided to just keep question period going.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister on a point of order.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a point of order: I may have misspoken during my answer to the member from Barrie. The portable housing benefit will be increasing to \$15 million a year in 2020.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On a point of order, Speaker, I'd like to correct my record. In my response to the member

from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I mentioned Lanark as his community. I meant to say “Renfrew.”

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

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 43, relating to allocation of time on Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 28, 2017, Madame Lalonde moved government notice of motion number 43 relating to allocation of time on Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Romano, Ross
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	McDonnell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 48; the nays are 41.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to once again welcome Deanna Allain and her service dog in training, Carlin, back to the Legislature this afternoon to listen to the debates. Welcome to Queen’s Park, Deanna.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming Dr. Geoff Hinton and his daughter Emma Hinton, who are visiting the House today.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

SIMCOE CHRISTMAS PANORAMA RIVER OF LIGHTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Christmas spirit received a boost locally with the flip of a switch, opening the town of Simcoe’s Simcoe Christmas Panorama River of Lights, Ontario’s original light festival. Magic and childhood fantasy blend with tradition, family and a multi-generational connectedness combined with hot chocolate and horse-drawn wagon rides.

Volunteer crews have been working—as they have for the past 60 years—to set up the approximately 60 displays, from the Three Little Pigs, to a red tractor, to a plethora of Christmas-related exhibits. The tales and legends of our youth are brought to light every evening in a stunning sea of 300,000 lights looped through and around the trees.

Besides bringing joy and smiles to the faces of the young and young at heart, the exhibits attract many from afar, boosting business and our winter tourism economy.

The Simcoe Christmas Panorama River of Lights and all of our area Christmas parades and concerts remain iconic spectacles of this wonderful time of year—a fanciful, thrown-together blend of the religious, the commercial, civic pride and, quite honestly, just plain fun.

SERVICE DOGS

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I want to talk about service dogs and the important role they play in Ontario.

Children are being denied access to their school for their service dogs—dogs that they have with them at all other times. They help relieve anxiety and provide them with safety and independence. That has to change.

We’re joined today by Deanna Allain from my riding of Hamilton Mountain. Deanna is 17 years old, and she has been volunteering with Autism Dog Services since she was 10. She came to Toronto today with Carlin, who she is training so that a child can get the full benefit of

what Carlin has to offer. But she made that trip with trepidation, because as a service dog in training, Carlin can be denied access at any time. The rules under the AODA for service dogs do not apply to dogs in training.

Security here at Queen's Park understands that to be properly trained, service dogs must be exposed to exactly the same situations that they will encounter in their future lives, but there is nothing to ensure that access elsewhere.

Deanna is also an advocate. Thanks to her lobbying, Hamilton city council passed a bylaw last May that ensures access for service dogs in training to all public facilities in our city.

I urge this government to take action so that service dogs are fully accommodated. They bring incredible benefits to so many people, and they deserve our support.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: At 5:30 this morning, I did a bit of grocery shopping at the local 24-hour store. I left with more than I bargained for, but not in the usual sense.

The store was primarily empty except for me, a few staff members and a man working behind the checkout. As he was scanning my items, we made small talk, and I learned how he had spent the last 12 hours serving his customers. Throughout the night, he was regularly visited by individuals with addictions to drugs and alcohol, and people suffering from mental health problems, and, what is worse still, he feared for his safety.

He was from Africa and was working hard to have a good life here in Canada. All he wanted was to have a home of his own, but no matter how hard he works, he can't get ahead. There are many others in the same situation who are living on a minimum wage, trying to make ends meet.

When he learned that I worked at Queen's Park, he thanked me for the recent increase in minimum wage. I am so proud of our government's commitment to ensuring the best future for all Ontario families and workers through Bill 148.

As I left the store, I looked back at the man, and I watched him greet his next customer. For once, I was pleased that I was leaving with more than I had shopped for.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

NEW HAMBURG TREE OF LIGHT

Mr. Michael Harris: For the past 33 years, at the beginning of December, as dusk falls on the town of New Hamburg, residents have gathered at the corner of Huron and Peel streets to sing carols and sip Wellesley apple cider as they await the official lighting of the New Hamburg Tree of Light.

This Friday marks the 34th annual celebration. Kicking off with the New Hamburg Concert Band, of course, the lighting of the tree—a new tree, might I add—will soon illuminate the township, thanks to the many Wilmot businesses and community members who ensure that not one light goes dim.

For more than three decades, the New Hamburg Lioness and Lions clubs have been working tirelessly throughout the year to make this event the success that it is. And for 34 years, they have raised over \$300,000 to support projects within our community.

The Tree of Light event kicks off a series of Christmas parades in my riding. This weekend, I'll be participating in the Elmira, Baden and New Hamburg parades. Following them, throughout the month of December, Wellesley, St. Agatha, St. Clements and New Dundee will also be holding their annual Christmas parades.

Each year I look forward to attending and meeting many of my constituents, who come out and brave the cold to come together and join in the Christmas holiday spirit and, of course, get a glimpse of Santa as well.

I'm always so impressed with how our communities come together with small budgets but big hearts, to make this time of year one of joy, happiness and togetherness for those of all ages. That's what our communities are all about. It's what the Tree of Light celebration is about. And it is, of course, what Christmas is all about.

Speaker, merry Christmas, and happy new year to everyone.

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

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais parler du projet de loi qui va créer l'Université de l'Ontario français.

On penserait que ça serait une opportunité de joie pour moi, étant donné que j'y travaille depuis si longtemps. Malheureusement, non. Bien au contraire, aujourd'hui j'ai honte d'avoir à vous dire que le gouvernement a enterré notre université franco dans un projet de loi intitulé—écoutez bien ça—Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois, un projet de loi omnibus en finances de mi-année dont personne ne se souviendra jamais.

Toutes les autres universités en Ontario ont leur propre projet de loi. C'est une tradition qui date de 1841, quand l'Université Queen's a été établie à Kingston, jusqu'en 2008, avec l'Université Algoma.

Pourquoi ça dérange que l'université franco soit à l'annexe 43 d'un projet de loi omnibus sur lequel les libéraux ont déjà mis le bâillon? C'est qu'on ne pourra pas discuter de certains problèmes. Par exemple, l'université franco est limitée dans son mandat à des certificats et diplômes en arts, en sciences et en commerce, plutôt que dans toutes les branches du savoir. Donc, les soins infirmiers, la médecine, les dentistes, la pharmacie, le droit, l'architecture—oubliez ça. L'université franco n'aura pas le droit d'offrir ces programmes-là, bien que la demande pour ces professionnels francophones est là.

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Je ne sais pas pourquoi les libéraux de M^{me} Wynne ne sont pas capables de faire ce que tous les autres

gouvernements ont été capables de faire depuis 200 ans : nous donner notre université dans un projet de loi unique.

DEMANDEURS D'ASILE LGBTQ

LGBTQ REFUGEES

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Hier, le gouvernement fédéral a présenté ses excuses à la communauté LGBTQ et a souligné l'importance de défendre les droits des lesbiennes, gais, bisexuels, transgenres, queers et bispériuels partout dans le monde.

On this occasion of the historic federal apology, I think it's also important to remember the heroes who were there and defended and protected these rights throughout the world. One of these women heroes is a former colleague of mine, a law professor named Nicole LaViollette. She was a pioneer in the area of sexual and gender minority refugees. For 18 years, she trained members of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada on how to adjudicate sexual and gender minority claims. She was also one of the key people who assisted the United Nations in developing guidelines to recognize LGTBQ refugees. It's hard to imagine, but at a point in time, gays and lesbians were not recognized as deserving to be considered as refugees. She was able to advise the United Nations on how to develop the guidelines.

My former colleague founded, in Ottawa, Capital Rainbow Refuge. It was the first private sponsor of a refugee in Ottawa.

Sadly, she died of cancer in 2015, so she was not there yesterday in Ottawa for the apology, but her partner, Lisa Hébert, was. She and other people continue to do the good work that Nicole had started. Capital Rainbow Refuge has now sponsored more than four dozen people so far. I want to say thank you to Lisa, and I want to say, à la mémoire de Nicole, merci pour tout ton travail.

SEASONAL EVENTS IN NIPISSING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The spirit of Christmas is very much alive in Nipissing, with a host of seasonal events taking place to inspire yuletide cheer. I understand that the North Bay Santa Claus Parade was a huge hit as always, Speaker; I was here for the weekend votes.

But this past Friday, I did have the opportunity to take part in the annual downtown Christmas walk, which features the traditional tree-lighting and showcases our downtown merchants. It was a great opportunity. Our office stays open late. I can tell you first-hand that the cookies that my wife, Patty—Miss P, as she is called at home—offers up are well worth the visit to the office.

The holiday season in Nipissing also offers up some wonderful musical entertainment. The Canadian Forces Base North Bay band just held its annual concert at the Capitol Centre. Scollard Hall was packed for the third annual Christmas concert in support of the Nipissing Serenity Hospice. Haleyfest is an annual one-night celebration of local children's school choirs in memory of

Art and Doris Haley. It too takes place at the Capitol Centre, a week from tonight.

The Ontario Northland Christmas Train rolls into North Bay on Sunday evening.

Of course, the volunteers with the North Bay Santa Fund are hard at work once again, raising funds and tapping into the enormous generosity of our community to help those families less fortunate in our area.

I'm so proud that, in Nipissing, the Christmas season is about spreading joy and good cheer and making a difference in our communities—and don't forget your red kettles.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: Our official opposition caucus is united in enthusiastic endorsement of the People's Guarantee—what the Toronto Star calls “a serious plan that will deserve serious consideration from voters.”

Included in this plan are strong statements about the need to protect and preserve our natural environment. Our caucus accepts the scientific consensus on climate change. The earth is warming, and human activity is a significant contributing factor. We in Ontario need to do our part to reduce carbon emissions.

Premier Wynne's government is for a cap-and-trade scheme that will ship 466 million taxpayer dollars to California. Our caucus categorically rejects that approach. But we also know that doing nothing is not an option. Why is this? The Trudeau government in Ottawa is mandating a carbon-pricing benchmark. While no one likes or wants new taxes, all the provinces will need to respond.

There is a better way for the people of Ontario. We say that every dollar collected in carbon price revenue should be returned to Ontario families and taxpayers in the form of corresponding tax relief, as verified by the Auditor General.

We also say that action needs to be taken to support initiatives which clean up our Great Lakes and reduce sewage going into our lakes and rivers. That is our leader's assurance to the people of Ontario, part of his People's Guarantee. We commend this plan for positive change to the people of Ontario.

We also need to protect our groundwater for today and for future generations. That's why I continue to advocate for a science-based approach to considering applications for large-scale permits to take water in Ontario, and I'm starting to question why we don't have some kind of effective deposit/return system for plastic, single-use beverage containers. Surely we can do better to improve the recycling rates of empty plastic bottles.

Together, let us embrace the promise of the future.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Hon. Reza Moridi: These are exciting times for scientists and innovators in our province of Ontario. We find ourselves, through the power of our own ingenuity, on the cusp of amazing developments. A world is emerging in which vast amounts of data and ever-faster computers can help us make smarter decisions, where terrible diseases are not merely treated but cured, and where discoveries allow us to avert the worst scenarios of climate change.

Travelling the province and beyond as Ontario's Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, I am fortunate to meet with researchers and entrepreneurs bringing this new world into view, yet I also see that with exciting possibilities in science and technology we find ourselves in uncertain times: a time where more and more people—and governments—have become skeptical about science and research; where climate change is not fact but opinion; and where a breakthrough medicine that saves thousands of lives is steeped in conspiracy.

I would like to say loud and clear: Ontario believes in its researchers and scientists. They are our brightest light, and we look to them for direction and guidance as we build a better province for current and future generations.

That's why this government recently appointed Dr. Molly Shoichet as Ontario's first chief scientist, to promote Ontario as a hub for research across Canada and the world, attract global research talents, and be a champion of Ontario science.

Another champion we are very fortunate to have in this province is taking research to new heights. His work will have an impact on every sector and everyone's lives and may one day be compared to the advent of the Internet or even the introduction of electricity.

I am talking about Geoffrey Hinton. Yesterday, the *New York Times* wrote, "In 2012, Geoffrey Hinton changed the way machines see the world." Dr. Hinton is an internationally acclaimed scientist and emeritus distinguished professor of computer science at the University of Toronto. He is the winner of the prestigious 2012 Killam Prize in engineering, the IEEE/RSE James Clerk Maxwell Medal, and Canada's top award in science and engineering, which is the NSERC Herzberg Gold Medal. Dr. Hinton is known globally as the "godfather of deep learning," and is now the chief scientific adviser at the Vector Institute.

At its most basic, his aim is to make computers think like a human brain and to make sense of and find structure in infinitely large data sets.

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His research group at the University of Toronto has made major breakthroughs in deep learning that have revolutionized speech recognition and object classification—technologies that have had a significant impact around the world.

Simply put, I firmly believe that if it wasn't for Dr. Hinton, we wouldn't have a Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence in our province of Ontario.

I am honoured to say that Dr. Hinton is in the House today. On behalf of Ontario, I would like to acknowledge his outstanding achievements to date. We look forward to the advancements he and his students will bring to artificial intelligence over the coming months and years.

There's an important lesson to be learned from Dr. Hinton. There was a time when the concept of artificial intelligence through deep learning was on the sidelines. But the Ontario government stood by scientists like Dr. Hinton. He never gave up on his vision, and Ontario never gave up on his incredible work.

As far back as 2009, Ontario supported his work. Since then, the province has provided ongoing support for deep learning research in Ontario, such as the deep learning research facilities at the University of Waterloo and autonomous vehicle research at the University of Toronto that uses deep learning concepts.

I believe there is something to learn from supporting research from the beginning—well before those eureka moments. It's because of our faith in Dr. Hinton that we have the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Ontario.

Artificial intelligence has the power to unlock new ways to do business, new ways to harness energy sources and fight climate change, and new ways to save lives.

Our AI graduates are recognized as among the best in the world and we want to produce more of them. That's why Ontario is partnering with the Vector Institute to work toward graduating 1,000 applied masters students in artificial-intelligence-related fields every year within the next five years, and why government plans to increase the number of post-secondary students graduating in science, technology, engineering and mathematics by 25% over the same period, so Ontario becomes the number one jurisdiction in North America for post-secondary graduates in STEM.

By investing in science, research and innovation now, we are ensuring that Ontario companies become leaders so we can export our technology around the globe. Most important, we are investing in a safer, healthier and more prosperous province.

I have great faith in Ontario's researchers, scientists and innovators like Dr. Geoffrey Hinton. Ontario is on the right path today for a better tomorrow, and I can't wait to see what each one of them can achieve.

We are proud of Dr. Geoffrey Hinton and his contribution to science.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further statements by ministries?

HOLODOMOR

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm privileged to rise in the House this afternoon to inform the House that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has set November 20 to 26

as the 10th annual national Holodomor Awareness Week in Canada.

On Holodomor Memorial Day, our thoughts are with those across our province and our country who are remembering and honouring the memory of those who perished during one of the darkest moments in history.

We also pay tribute to the survivors of this evil crime. Many of these survivors reside here in Ontario.

The Holodomor was not caused by environmental factors such as drought or a bad harvest, but an attempt by the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to starve the Ukrainian people into submission in the 1930s. The word “Holodomor” itself translates to “hunger extermination.”

Grain farmers, a group who made up a large portion of the Ukrainian population, were requisitioned at gunpoint to export more than they produced. When they resisted, Kremlin activists robbed them of their product, leaving them without any source of nutrition, and blocked borders so that Ukrainians couldn’t even scavenge for other food sources. In fact, migration was banned from famine-ravaged areas.

When the Holodomor reached its disastrous peak in 1933, 25,000 people passed away every day. This means that as a result of this horrifying event, between 20% and 25% of the population of Soviet-occupied Ukraine was killed. Hundreds of thousands of children were left orphaned and homeless due to this senseless act. What’s more, Soviet authorities refused offers of international aid, which were subsequently denounced as being merely anti-Soviet propaganda.

In the breadbasket of Europe, an estimated five million to 10 million men, women and children perished because of starvation, without record. It is one of the century’s most evil acts. Entire families were wiped out and villages depopulated, and Ukraine was forcibly brought under the heel of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine’s suffering continued into the post-Holodomor years. It fell under brutal Nazi occupation in World War II, only to be controlled again by the Soviet Union for many decades after the Nazis were defeated. It was only in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, that Ukraine finally became an independent member of the family of nations.

Ukrainians mark the fourth Saturday of every November as Holodomor Remembrance Day. Bringing awareness to this event is critical to realizing a better future. This year marks the 85th commemoration of the beginning of the Holodomor, and the annual National Holodomor Awareness Week continues to seek to bring awareness and pay tribute to the victims of this genocide. It also seeks to retroactively restore justice for the members of the Ukrainian community.

The House unanimously passed the Holodomor Memorial Day Act in April 2009, recognizing this famine as an act of genocide, joining around 60 other nations that have done so. It was the first private bill of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that was sponsored by all three parties, and this fact reflects the support that all Ontarians

have for our Ukrainian friends and neighbours who lost loved ones during those terrible times.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is fortunate to have a strong and vibrant Ukrainian community that enriches our province socially, culturally and economically. The largest Ukrainian communities can be found in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Niagara and Thunder Bay, as well as in many other smaller communities.

We remember the tragedy of the Holodomor and pay tribute to the strength and resilience of the people of Ukraine. We salute their ability to survive and start new lives here in Ontario. We share their hopes for a lifetime of peace and prosperity in Ontario, in Canada and in Ukraine, and we reaffirm our commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law to prevent another Holodomor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is time for responses.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Michael Harris: I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, in recognition of the decades-long work that has driven the field of artificial intelligence into areas we had never dared dreamed of, and, of course, the work of University of Toronto professor emeritus Geoffrey Hinton. Speaker, whether he is being labelled as a godfather, guru or pioneer of recent leaps forward in the artificial intelligence field, the fact is that our world is transforming and advancing today, tomorrow and in the future due to the barrier-breaking work of Professor Hinton.

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A true leader in the field of deep learning, Professor Hinton’s determination and steadfast belief against many odds literally broke through barriers to unleash the potential of a strain of artificial intelligence called “neural networks” or “neural nets,” AI-driven computer systems designed to mimic the human brain, allowing them to learn.

After decades of work in relative obscurity and battling prevailing beliefs in computer science that shunned neural-net potential, a series of stunning breakthroughs by Professor Hinton’s graduate students over the past five years have ushered in a new era of computing, and it’s an era that is truly moving our world forward, already powering technology like voice recognition software in your cellphone and laying the groundwork for rapid advances in the way our tech devices and systems interact and learn from the world around them.

Born and raised in England, Professor Hinton’s apple didn’t fall from the tree, as they say, Speaker, as he is the great-great-grandson of 19th century logician George Boole, the inventor of Boolean algebra, which provided the foundation of modern computing.

Through the University of Cambridge to the University of Edinburgh and all the way to the University of Toronto in 1987, Professor Hinton remained convinced

that, despite all of the naysayers, the discredited neural-net concept was the key to unlocking the future potential of artificial intelligence. Of course, Speaker, he was right.

It will be his work that we will see driving driverless cars, smartening our smartphones and leading to significant health advances in diagnosis and treatment that will benefit people all over the world.

Today, we join with all in this House in recognizing the groundbreaking work of Professor Hinton, a pioneer, a guru and the godfather of neural-net research that is shepherding our world toward a brighter future. Thank you and congratulations.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. John Yakabuski: It being national National Holodomor Awareness Week, I join with Ukrainians in Ontario, in Canada and around the world to remember the victims of the Holodomor, the Ukrainian genocide.

Holodomor was a Soviet-engineered famine in which an estimated 7.5 million Ukrainians were intentionally targeted and systematically starved to death in 1932 and 1933. Joseph Stalin was punishing Ukrainians for resisting Soviet authoritarian rule. Using so-called red trains of carts, they took the first harvest of the season's crop to government depots. During the Holodomor, these brigades were part of the Soviet government's policy of deliberately taking away food from Ukrainians.

Speaker, as I've stated in this chamber in the past, I've had the incredible honour of meeting a few Holodomor survivors, as well as their children and grandchildren. I am truly amazed at the incredible work the Ukrainian community in Canada has been doing to educate the wider public about the unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainian people, including the Holodomor bus and updates to our school curriculum.

Additionally, on May 28 I had the honour of attending the groundbreaking for a permanent memorial for the victims of this genocide, near the CNE in Toronto.

In Ontario, the fourth Saturday of November in each year is proclaimed Holodomor Memorial Day to memorialize those who perished as victims of genocide by famine, but it also reminds us today that the forces of democracy and individual liberty must always be vigilant against the corrupting forces of authoritarianism and collectivism.

Today, I join all Ontarians, particularly Ontarians and Canadians of Ukrainian origin, in solemnly marking the anniversary of this horrific crime against humanity.

HOLODOMOR

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute honour and privilege to rise on Holodomor Memorial Day. I had the honour and privilege of being one of those co-signers of that bill, the first tri-party bill ever in the history of Ontario and possibly Canada, and I want to thank the Speaker for initiating that bill. Thank you for that.

Of course, the real initiators were Ukrainians who live across Ontario, and, certainly I'm privileged to have a number of them in my riding. I also was at the CNE for the memorial soil breaking, which was an honour as well.

I think it's almost incomprehensible, the absolute horror which we memorialize today. To think of a quarter of the population being killed, to think of five million to 10 million people losing their lives—and it's not because there wasn't enough food. I think other members have mentioned this. The silos, the barns, were filled with grain. There were lots of crops, but Ukrainians were not allowed at those crops. It was forced starvation.

Sadly, the west was also complicit. Sadly, we had journalists who went over, were toured around by Soviet PR folk, and came back saying, "There is no starvation. Nothing is wrong here," so the aid was not forthcoming. When we think about this horror, we really think as well about our own complicity.

I really had the honour of having one of the survivors in my congregation. I've spoken about her year after year when we memorialize this day. She remembers the event as a little girl; she has now passed away herself. She would recount to me watching the members of her family starve to death to feed her—members of her family starving to death to feed her—and stepping over bodies in the streets. That was the depth of the horror of this event.

So that we never forget, and also remember what happens when we work together in this place and we actually make something positive happen.

To the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and to all Ukrainians, I say thank you for your advocacy. Thank you, and we will not forget.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is an honour to have Dr. Geoffrey Hinton here today and to speak about his career and innovations in artificial intelligence. Dr. Hinton is widely recognized as the godfather of deep learning and a leader in the field of artificial intelligence.

Although we stand here today to honour his work, Dr. Hinton has fought an uphill battle since he first started studying neural networks and deep learning. His first paper on the topic was published in 1987 at a time when most had decided that neural networks were a dead end in AI research. Deep learning refers to the training of neural networks—structures that are created to loosely resemble the human brain—to create representations of data that allow the networks to learn like humans. The technique has many different applications such as image and speech recognition and big data analytics.

We are thankful now for Dr. Hinton's persistence and his foresight. In fact, Ontario's research community is stronger because of his resilience. The impacts of neural networks have rippled through the technology industry and more and more start-ups are using machine learning as a building block of their innovations.

My riding of Kitchener–Waterloo is an incredible tech hub with talented entrepreneurs and a strong research

community. For instance, 26-year-old Shiva Bhardwaj is one example. His company Pitstop uses machine learning techniques to predict vehicle failures before they happen. This technology has already been adopted by seven dealerships in Toronto, Waterloo and Michigan.

In a world of fast-paced research commercialization, Dr. Hinton's work is a reminder of the importance of funding curiosity-driven research in the sciences and engineering, particularly funding by provincial governments.

Dr. Hinton is also a distinguished researcher within Google's Toronto office and chief scientific adviser at the Vector Institute in Toronto.

Our province's essential role in the AI revolution means that we must continue to create and support new talent to meet the increasing demand and ensure that the social and economic benefits of AI are felt across the province for both men and women who are interested in this field.

A sincere thank you to Dr. Hinton for dedicating your career to propelling the field of AI forward. It is indeed an honour to have you with us today.

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

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have represented with me here a number of petitions with over 4,000 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2009 the Ministry of Transportation received environmental clearance for six lanes of the 401 between Tilbury to Elgin county;

"Whereas the 401 between Tilbury and London was already known as 'carnage alley' due to the high rate of collisions and fatalities there;

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"Whereas current work being done on the 401 between Tilbury and Ridgeway will reduce the road to a single lane for up to three years thus making this stretch a serious safety concern;

"Whereas there have already been four deaths, nine serious injuries requiring hospitalization and over eight collisions this summer within the one-lane construction area;

"Whereas the government of the day pledged to invest \$13.5 billion in highway improvements and has sharply increased the fees for driver permits and licence renewal fees which are used for highway maintenance and improvements;

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

"To commit to upgrading the 401 from four to six lanes and install a median barrier from Tilbury to Elgin county."

I wholeheartedly approve of this petition and I will give it to page Abby.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Florence Dines from Capreol in my riding for this petition. 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;

"We, the undersigned, 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 Zunairah to bring it to the Clerk.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2005, the Health Council of Canada produced a report warning about a growing shortage of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals. According to a recent report by Canadian Community Health Survey, there are at least 800,000 Ontarians who do not have a family physician;

"Whereas the need for a family physician is fundamental for all citizens especially those with small children or senior citizens;

"Whereas the Ontario government reduced the medical residency positions in Ontario by 50, causing upheaval among doctors and citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"That the government reinstates the 50 medical residency positions they cut immediately, so that medical graduates can open up practices in Ontario, rather than losing physicians to other provinces and countries."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with page Andrew.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Chantalle Thériault from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly ... 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 support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Olivia to bring it to the Clerk.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

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

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

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

“Whereas the Wynne government has since spent millions to run ads such as those for the Ontario pension plan that were extremely partisan in nature; and

“Whereas the Wynne government is currently using hundreds of thousands of taxpayers’ dollars to run partisan hydro ads; and

“Whereas the government did not feel the need to advertise to inform the people of Ontario of any of the many hydro rate increases; and

“Whereas history shows that the Wynne and McGuinty governments have increased ad spending in the year preceding a general election; and

“Whereas these scarce taxpayer resources could be better spent to reverse cuts to important health and social services;

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

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

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Amely.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’m presenting this petition on behalf of Don Deighton from Kitchener–Waterloo.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas upwards of 30,000 Ontarians are on the wait-list for long-term care (LTC); and

“Whereas wait times for people who urgently need long-term care and are waiting in hospital have increased by 270% since the Liberal government came into office; and

“Whereas the number of homicides in long-term care being investigated by the coroner are increasing each year; and

“Whereas, over a period of 12 years, the government has consistently ignored recommendations regarding long-term care from provincial oversight bodies such as the Ontario Ombudsman and the Auditor General; and

“Whereas Ontario legislation does not require a minimum staff-to-resident ratio in long-term-care homes, resulting in insufficient staffing and inability for LTC homes to comply with ministry regulations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act in the best interest of Ontarians and conduct a full public inquiry into seniors care with particular attention to the safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; regulations, enforcement and inspections; and government action and inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care system.”

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

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 94, Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems), 2017, will make it easier to get convictions for drivers who do not stop when lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended on a school bus; and

“Whereas responsible governments must update laws as new technology is developed; and

“Whereas numerous states and provinces are already leveraging new technology to convict drivers who put children in danger while Ontario falls behind; and

“Whereas municipalities including the city of Mississauga have passed resolutions in support of Bill 94; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has had three years to conduct consultations after a similar bill was initially introduced in 2014 and thousands of children are put in danger each day due to low conviction rates;

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

“To call Bill 94 to committee so it can be strengthened with input from the Ministry of Transportation and other experts engaged in ensuring student safety and to pass Bill 94 into legislation in order to protect our children from motorists who disobey school bus safety laws.”

I wholeheartedly approve of this petition, will sign it and give it to Erion.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for all Ontarians—no matter who they are, or where they live—the health of their family comes first, and it should come first for the government of Ontario, but unfortunately Liberal political self-interest comes first;

“Whereas 1,200 nurses have been fired since January 2015;

“Whereas hospital beds are being closed across Ontario; and

“Whereas hospital budgets have been frozen for four years, and increases this year will not keep up with inflation or a growing population;

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

“Stop the Liberal cuts to hospitals, and ensure that, at a minimum, hospital funding keeps up with the growing costs of inflation and population growth, each and every year.”

I fully agree. I will affix my signature and send it down to the desk with Adam.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Todd Smith: I’ve received another stack of petitions here entitled “Make Moratorium on School Closures Retroactive to 2016-17.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Education, Mitzie Hunter, declared on June 28, 2017, a province-wide moratorium on future school closures based on the results of the spring engagement process, stating that the pupil accommodation review process was flawed and should be overhauled; and

“Whereas during the 2016-2017 school year this flawed pupil accommodation review process was used to close schools; and

“Whereas some of these schools are not scheduled to close until the end of June 2018, so that staffing for these schools remains in place for 2017-2018; and

“Whereas it would be consistent with the spirit of the moratorium and the reason for the overhaul of the PAR process, to stop those closures announced after September 2016; and

“Whereas the 2015 Auditor General’s report section 4.3.2 (p. 299) recommends greater funds be put towards maintenance of current schools; and

“Further, whereas the current funding formula does not properly address the needs of schools within rural and northern communities;

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

“1. Reverse the closure decisions for all schools where those decisions were made after September 1, 2016;

“2. Provide fair and equitable pupil accommodation review processes that school boards must follow, recognizing the unique needs of rural and northern communities; and

“3. Review the current funding formula with a goal of developing fair and equitable funding formulae for all rural, northern and urban schools.”

I agree, will sign it, and send it to the table with page Isabelle.

ENERGY POLICIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Lois McRae from Val Caron in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas hydro bills in Ontario have become unaffordable for too many people, and that reducing hydro bills by up to 30% for families and businesses is an ambitious but realistic target; and

“Whereas the only way to fix the hydro system is to address the root causes of high prices including privatization, excessive profit margins, oversupply and more; and

“Whereas Ontario families should not have to pay time-of-use premiums, and those living in a rural or northern region should not have to pay higher, punitive, delivery charges; and

“Whereas returning Hydro One to public ownership would deliver over \$7 billion back to the province and the people of Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: reduce “hydro bills for businesses and families by up to 30%, eliminating mandatory time-of-use, ending unfair rural delivery costs, and restoring public ownership of Hydro One.”

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

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize test-

ing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Speaker, I support this petition. I have put my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Erion.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move the following motion:

Whereas Ontario families and businesses are now struggling to pay hydro bills that have skyrocketed due to privatization policies enacted by Liberal and Conservative governments; and

Whereas, for over a century, Ontario’s system of public power made our province an economic powerhouse that provided good jobs and prosperity for Ontario families and businesses; and

Whereas the Liberal government sold off its majority ownership of Hydro One, Ontario’s oldest and most important public asset, without consulting the people of Ontario and without an electoral mandate; and

Whereas instead of lowering rates as the Premier promised, the privatized Hydro One continues to seek sharp rate increases on behalf of private shareholders that will further harm Ontario families and businesses;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to immediately begin to bring Hydro One back into public hands by financing the purchase of shares using Hydro One shareholder dividends, moving towards the people of Ontario owning Hydro One once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5.

Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s my pleasure to rise and speak to this extremely important motion. What this motion does is put straight out to the people of Ontario and all of the other members in this Legislature exactly what New Democrats see as the future of Ontario, should we form government—in other words, what we would do with our electricity system next June should the good people of Ontario give us the opportunity.

It’s quite different from the vision that the Liberals have, which we’ve been struggling under as a province for years now, and it’s extremely different from the vision that the Conservatives have, specifically because the Conservatives have the same vision as the Liberals. The New Democrats have a different vision, one that brings our electricity system back into the fold, if you will, so that it can be operated in the best interests of families and businesses and the people of this province overall.

We believe that the people of this province and our businesses and industrial players need to be at the heart of our hydro system. That’s what allowed our province to grow and thrive for so many decades, and it’s shameful to see what the Liberals and Conservatives have done to our electricity system. We used to be the envy of the country, frankly, and unfortunately we now are at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to our electricity system.

Unfortunately, we’re at the top of the charts when it comes to what people pay here in Ontario to heat their homes, and we’ve heard too many stories about the choices that people have to make as a result—whether to heat or eat. That is never a choice that any Ontarian should have to make, especially when we know that that decision is being made while friends of Liberals and Conservatives laugh their way to the bank by reaping all kinds of money from a privatized electricity system. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful.

This particular motion reflects the central plank of the NDP plan when it comes to our electricity system. It’s a

plan that we announced back in January—some nine months ago—and it's a plan that we're very, very proud of. We firmly believe that the only way to get those bills down—not only for our families and businesses and industry today and over the short term, but also for the medium term and the long term—and keep them down and make sure that the system is operating on behalf of the best interests of the people of Ontario, is to bring it back into public hands. That's what we want to do.

The bottom line is this: Electricity—colloquially we call it “hydro”—is not a luxury. It is not a luxury for anyone, so it shouldn't be priced like a luxury in Ontario, but that's exactly what we have after this Liberal government has messed with our system so badly.

Everywhere I go, Speaker, to this very day—notwithstanding what you'll hear from the members of the Liberal side—the bottom line is that families continue to be at a breaking point. One of the major straws that is breaking that camel's back in so many households around this province is their electricity bill, their hydro bill.

I'll give you some examples. I met a woman in Kingston. Her name was Jane. She actually had to make the choice between buying groceries or paying for her electricity. She bought the groceries and guess what happened? Her electricity was cut off.

We all know what happens when your electricity gets cut off. Not only do you have to deal with the arrears because you couldn't pay your bill, but then there are all kinds of extra charges that are put on those bills—reconnection charges. Sometimes people have to pay deposits so that the utility is assured that the person is going to be good for the money if the reconnection occurs.

1600

It's a terrible system, but it's one that the Liberals have forced on the people of Ontario. People have had to make these untenable kinds of decisions. It's heartbreaking to see what we've come to, what families have had to come to just to make ends meet and to be able to get through to the end of the month—people like Richelle in Smithville. I met Richelle when I was on the campaign trail in the Niagara West–Glanbrook by-election. We were talking about the hydro issue. I had been talking to a number of people across the province. Richelle invited me into her home. She was a lovely woman, a mom with three kids. She and her husband tried really hard to keep their family afloat and do well by their children. Her hydro bill, she told me as we were sitting around her kitchen table, was literally so high that she had to at the time—hopefully, she's not having to do the same thing, because I understand her husband eventually got better work and was able to get a benefits plan, but at the time there was no benefits plan. All three of her children had various medications that they needed to take. She had to take medications. Her husband had to take medications. They had no benefit plan. She literally had to make that decision to pay the hydro bills or fill the prescriptions for the family. Of course, being the great mom that she is,

she filled the prescriptions for her kids, but she and her husband, from time to time, went without their prescriptions because they couldn't pay for their prescriptions and for their electricity bill.

We could talk about pharmacare, which is the NDP's plan to make sure that everybody is covered for their prescription drugs, no matter where they work or how much money they earn. Instead, we're talking about another progressive idea of the NDP, which is to get Hydro One back into public hands, where it belongs, so no one like Richelle or no other family has to make the kinds of decisions like the ones Richelle had to make and the one Jane had to make in Kingston.

So many people are trapped in that struggle every month just to keep their families above water. People lie awake at night, worried sick about how they're going to pay their bills, worried sick as they walk to the mailbox to pull their bill out to see what the next shock is from Hydro.

It's really hard to believe that things could actually get worse than what the Liberals have already done to our electricity system. We were beside ourselves when we saw the Liberal government go ahead and sell off Hydro One. We thought it was the worst mistake any government could make. Of course, we've seen Conservatives do that for years when they were in government. Kathleen Wynne didn't have a mandate. She didn't have the right. Some 80% of Ontarians didn't want to do it, but she went ahead and did it. But do you know what? It got worse. It has gotten worse since the sell-off. Just in the last nine months since we put this plan out there, we've seen the situation get worse. We have seen the government announce another disastrous scheme in hydro. Why? Because they actually started listening to people like Richelle and to people like Jane in Kingston and to people in the ridings of all of those MPPs and all of these MPPs, as well, on both sides of the House. MPPs were getting complaints from people in their communities because the hydro bills were out of control.

So what did the government do? The government decided to announce a minimum \$40-billion borrowing scheme, so that they can borrow money to try to give a little bit of relief to families because they've burdened families so badly with their wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One and their wrong-headed management of the electricity system.

Speaker, it was a terrible decision to borrow \$40 billion—a terrible, terrible decision. Do you know what's even worse? It's very, very short-term relief that people are going to get. Almost immediately after the election, within a couple of years, the bills are going to spike right back up again. Once again, the \$40-billion borrowing has nothing to do with what's right for the people of Ontario; it's the Liberals trying to buy votes before the next election. Shame on them.

Do you know what else is happening besides the \$40-billion boondoggle that the Liberals have engaged the province in, unfortunately? Hydro One—their privatized Hydro One—is now continuing to apply for even more

and more rate increases. The applications continue to flow to the OEB for further rate increases. That's what the privatized Hydro One is doing. Why? They want rate increases so they can give a bigger return on investment to their shareholders; that's why. They don't want rate increases for any other reason other than to provide value for their shareholders.

Well, guess what? When the people of Ontario were the only shareholders of this public company, it would have been our benefit that they were looking out for, but they're not looking out for our benefit; they're looking out for the benefit of the friends of the Liberal and Conservative Parties that the electricity system is full of. Whether it's Hydro One or whether it's the private operators that the Conservatives started bringing on board and that the Liberals continue to bring on board, we know those organizations are full of the friends of these two parties. And here we have Hydro One making sure that the shareholders and the bankers who did well by this deal are going to get more and more money because they're trying to apply for increased rates.

At the same time, the CEO—here's another bad decision. Just within the last nine months or so—maybe a little longer on this one—the CEO who used to make about—am I wrong?—\$800,000?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Four hundred thousand.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Four or five hundred thousand—is now making \$4.5 million. He went from making \$400,000 to \$4.5 million. Isn't that a great thing for the CEO of Hydro One? And who's paying for it? Of course, the ratepayers are paying for it. Ontario families are paying for it. Businesses are paying for it. Industry is paying for it.

Then, that CEO of the privatized Hydro One, the public company that the Liberals sold off to their friends, decided that he's going to use Hydro One and the assets that exist there, that used to be owned by all of us and now are owned by Liberal friends, to purchase a coal-burning electricity company in the States. Can you imagine that—a coal-burning electricity company in the States called Avista, the American company called Avista, which is a coal-burning electricity company?

I just find that an amazing development. The New Democrats for years and years tried to push the Liberals to shut down coal, and they kept promising that they were going to shut down coal in the province of Ontario, and they finally got around to shutting down coal in the province of Ontario. Then the next thing you know, they privatize Hydro One, and what do they do? They buy a coal-burning plant in the States with the proceeds of Hydro One sales. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Congratulations, Liberals. We have a privatized Hydro One transmission system here in this province, and we now also have coal-burning again. We now own coal-burning facilities. Congratulations; that's so visionary.

Today, Hydro One is actually actively looking for new ways—new ways—to make profits off of Ontario's most vulnerable hydro users, and this one, Speaker, is one that I will fight until I have no fight left in me. This summer,

Hydro One applied for significant rate increases for 21 remote communities. Most of those remote communities are First Nations communities. Do you think First Nations communities in this province can handle rate increases on their hydro bill?

Think about it. When we talk about remote communities, we're talking about communities that are northwest of Thunder Bay. We're talking about communities that are on the Manitoba border, that are north of Kenora, and here we are saying they can actually afford higher hydro rates? It's absolutely unacceptable.

But not only that, Speaker. When it comes to folks who can't actually take any more price increases—and we know that First Nations are definitely in that category—we also have a privatized Liberal Hydro One that's trying to sneak into Ontario something called pre-pay hydro meters. Some folks might not know what that means. You can go to Thatcherism in Great Britain to find out exactly what happened there. I guess Kathleen Wynne has turned into Margaret Thatcher after all. I guess we thought she was going to go there in the first place, but now we have the evidence.

1610

Prepay hydro metres: That means your hydro is not going to work in your home until you plug the meter, until you put money in the meter. You put money in the meter or you transfer money online to the utility and all of a sudden you're going to get hydro. But if you're having a rough month and something's gone wrong—I had one recently. My dog got really sick and I had to spend a lot of money making sure my dog wasn't going to leave us prematurely. If I was in a situation that lots of families are in and I wasn't able to pay my bills—I acknowledge I'm not in that situation and I'm very, very lucky that I'm not in that situation, but many, many people are.

What's going to happen? You pay the bill and the next thing you know, you have to plug the meter but you've run out of money. You don't have the money to plug the meter. You don't have the money to put into the meter anymore. Well, you're out of luck. Not only are you out of luck, but you're out of electricity, and you're not getting electricity again until you plug the meter.

This is a really ugly way for Hydro One to get around the ban on winter cut-offs. You're not supposed to be able to cut people off in the winter, so Hydro One figures, "Well, here's what we'll do. We'll put people on prepaid meters and that way it's not our fault if they don't pay. We're not really cutting them off. We're just putting in a meter that if they don't plug it, if they don't put money in it, if they don't pay their meter in advance, they're going to not have any hydro in the winter, but that's not our fault." That's exactly the plan that Hydro One has.

The minister tries to tell us that somehow this has got nothing to do with low-income folks, and yet that is not the case. In Hydro One's own words, it says the prepaid meters are going to be used for customers who are high collection risks or in arrears. That's what it says in Hydro

One's application to do these prepaid meters. In Hydro One's own words, they say this: "Once the prepaid amount is used up, power is cut off until the customer is able to load the meter with more credits."

It is not a good thing that this Liberal government sold off Hydro One and now this Hydro One private company, this Liberal private Hydro One, is looking to bring prepaid meters into this province, prepaid meters that are targeted at low-income families. Shame on the Liberals for allowing this to happen.

Look, this is the new reality for hydro users in this province under the Liberal government and under a privatized Hydro One. We are at a tipping point in this province. The Liberals have spent 14 years driving up hydro costs for families and now the Premier is continuing to hurt Ontario families by continuing the sell-off of Hydro One and selling out control over our hydro system.

For months, the official opposition has been promising that they were going to release their plan for hydro. They kept telling us it was coming; it was going to show up. This past weekend, Ontarians got to see exactly what the Conservatives really stand for. I have to say I was shocked. I was shocked to hear that the Leader of the Opposition, Patrick Brown, is behind the Liberal hydro scheme 100%. They will make no changes to the Liberals' hydro scheme and they will make no changes to the \$40-billion borrowing scheme. That's what's in the Conservative plan. He actually intends to keep in place all of the disastrous and expensive private hydro plans that this Liberal government has put in place. It's not only disappointing, it's absolutely shocking. They talk a lot, they talk a good game, but when they came up with their plan on the weekend, it was exactly like the Liberals'.

Ontarians are welcome to know that there is actually a party that believes in something different, that believes in public hydro. We're not cut-and-privatize Conservatives. We're not cut-and-privatize Liberals. It's the Conservatives that started us on this path in the first place, which people will know. It was called deregulation and privatization under the government that took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It was a terrible, terrible decision. We pushed back on it; they had to stop. They stopped.

The Liberals took over and the Liberals went full steam ahead on privatization. They even privatized green energy in Ontario. How shameful is that? They even privatized green energy and, as a result, created a whole bunch of heartache all across this province when it came to the way that they implemented what should be a wonderful thing. Instead, it became a bitter pill, and that's on the Liberals; that's at the Liberals' feet. Instead of doing things for the benefit of community, for the benefit of municipalities and First Nations and community interests, they sold it off to their friends, the highest bidder for green energy, and that's unfortunate.

Look, Ontarians deserve a lot better. They deserve a lot better. This motion, in my humble opinion, is a first, best step to something better for this province. New Democrats will take the shareholder dividends that are

currently enriching Liberal and Conservative friends, and we're going to use those dividends over a period of time to buy back the shares in Hydro One. We're going to put Hydro One back into public hands. It's going to help the people of this province. It's going to help the businesses of this province. It's going to help industry in this province. Most importantly, it's going to ensure that we have an ability to control the transmission of electricity in our province so that it's in the best interests of our province and of the people of our province, not in the best interests of private shareholders, of friends of Conservatives and Liberals.

There's a lot more that we need to do, and that's in our plan, too. We're going to end the unfair billing practices so folks in rural and small-town Ontario don't have to pay higher—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Delivery.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —delivery charges. Thank you, Mr. Bisson.

We're going to make sure we get rid of the mandatory time-of-use pricing so that people don't get punished for cooking dinner at dinnertime. We're going to look at those private contracts, and the ones that don't need to be renewed—because a number of them are coming due soon—we're not going to renew.

We're going to also make sure that the surplus power we are producing is going to be marketed in a way that's of benefit to Ontario instead of giving it away the way the Liberals are doing. In fact, paying other people to take our excess energy is the situation we're in now, which is actually a ridiculous position to be in, but that was what the Liberals decided to do here in Ontario.

The bottom line is this: It's absolutely not too late to do the right thing. It is not too late for members in this House to stand in their place and acknowledge that the privatization of Hydro One was the wrong thing to do. The way to address that, the way to fix that mess that the Liberals have foisted onto the people of Ontario, is to vote in favour of this motion, which says we will start bringing back Hydro One by buying back the shares that have been sold off by the Liberals with the shareholder dividends that come in every year.

That's what you need to do: Vote in favour of this motion. Let's turn this ship around for the benefit of all Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a little early for Groundhog Day in the movie sense, but here we go again. If today's NDP opposition day motion has a familiar ring to it, it's because we heard this same song before, at the end of March of this year, 2017. The words are only slightly different, but the premises and conclusions of this mindlessly unworkable motion have been debated in this House before.

This ridiculous motion was decisively defeated the last time the NDP dug it up, dredged it up or threw it up, and I am going to make the case for its defeat yet again. The NDP being the NDP, however, we will likely see it again

in the new year, where it should be defeated at that time, too.

Let us take this egregiously stupid motion apart again. The motion's first "whereas" clause wrongly asserts a connection between Ontario's move to reform Hydro One to use some of its underlying value to finance the transit renewal our major cities so desperately need, and electricity rates. This is just flat-out wrong, foreseeably wrong, repeatedly wrong. Dredging up a wrong assumption yet again and yelling it even louder won't make it right. Repeating this assertion of a connection between Hydro One's ownership structure and electricity rates is an abject failure of any vestige of credibility or due diligence by the NDP.

The price of electricity in any jurisdiction is governed by four factors: capital expenses, interest rates and inflation, the price of fuel, and the cost of people. The cost of people is comparable everywhere. It actually takes fairly few people, compared to the amount and the value of the electricity generated, to run a region's transmission and distribution system. The cost of people is not a major driver of electricity rates in Ontario.

1620

The price of fuel in Ontario is nearly zero. Falling water, wind and sunshine cost nothing. Uranium use per unit of volume generated is very nearly zero. Natural gas use in Ontario is limited to peak periods of power usage. Its cost is very small compared with all the power Ontario generates and the fuel that it uses. The price of fuel is not a major driver of electricity rates in Ontario.

Interest rates and inflation have been close to zero for a decade. Unlike our American neighbours in the adjacent Great Lakes states, Ontario has undertaken, and in many cases completed and financed, its generation and transmission upgrades at interest rates close to zero. Interest rates and inflation are not a major driver of electricity rates in Ontario.

That leaves capital expenses. In the electricity sector, you are either building or renewing your transmission generation and distribution assets, or you're not. If you are building and renewing, you're incurring expenses in the tens billions of dollars, expenses whose costs are amortized over their useful lifetime and that end up on the electricity rate base.

If you're not building and renewing your generation transmission and distribution assets, you're postponing the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars of needed investments to a future date. At that future date, those investments will be more expensive and will need to be financed at a higher interest rate. Capital expenses are a major driver of electricity rates in Ontario. What that means is that the ownership of Hydro One, publicly held or partially privatized, is not a driver of electricity rates in Ontario. The first "whereas" clause in today's NDP opposition day motion is completely false.

The second "whereas" clause in today's NDP opposition day motion attributes Ontario's obvious dominant status as the largest economy with the greatest population and the highest standard of living and gross domestic

product in the Great Lakes basin solely to past energy policies during which time the government of Ontario maintained a monopoly in electricity generation and transmission. This is ludicrous.

Ontario is Canada's business, media, cultural, resource, industrial and educational hub. It is the destination chosen by more than half of all newcomers to Canada. The greater Toronto area is the third—after New York and Los Angeles—major population and commercial centre in North America. Ontario straddles and dominates the US eastern and Midwest regions. Ontario is rich in agriculture, minerals and forest products and is by far Canada's largest transportation hub. That's why Ontario is Canada's and the Great Lakes basin's economic powerhouse. The second "whereas" clause in today's NDP opposition day motion is as false as it is foolish.

The third false "whereas" in today's opposition day motion is that the province sold part of Hydro One without public consultation or a popular mandate. The Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets, chaired by former TD chief economist Ed Clark and including former Conservative Minister of Finance Janet Ecker and former NDP Minister of Government Services, Chair of Management Board, Minister of Health and Minister of Economic Development and Trade Frances Lankin, among a host of distinguished others, recommended doing exactly what Ontario subsequently did in the partial sale of equity in Hydro One while maintaining control over the organization.

The panel consulted widely in Ontario. Cabinet considered the options the panel presented. The plan to unlock some of Hydro One's equity to enhance urban transit was a key plank of the government's election platform in 2014, and the government was elected with a working majority to implement that platform just three and a half years ago.

The NDP leader and her party lost that election. This is the second NDP opposition day motion in this calendar year to try for a do-over on their failed 2014 election campaign. The way to the future in Ontario is forward, not backward as the NDP has pointed with this albatross of a policy. The third "whereas" clause in today's NDP opposition day motion is as false as it is baseless.

The fourth "whereas" clause in today's opposition day motion wrongly asserts that Hydro One's intent is to affect electricity rates. Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, legislation that properly amortizes new generation and transmission investments and moves electricity-related social costs onto the tax base from the electricity rate base, is the driver in reducing electricity rates in Ontario by an average of 25%, and the NDP voted against it. Electricity rates in Ontario are set by the Ontario Energy Board, not by the generators, not by the transmitters, not by the distributors and not by this Legislature. And electricity rates are certainly not set by shareholders, as this motion wrongly asserts. The fourth "whereas" clause in today's NDP opposition day motion is false.

Today's electricity rates in Ontario reflect the investment of \$35 billion in new and renewed power genera-

tion and \$15 billion in new and renewed power transmission and distribution, financed at interest rates of nearly zero and amortized over the useful lifetime of those generation, transmission and distribution assets.

Given that all the justification clauses for today's NDP opposition day motion are demonstrably false, any conclusions that the NDP might draw based upon those clauses represent the manifestation of the adage "garbage in, garbage out." But let's talk about how stupid and unworkable their conclusion to renationalize electricity transmission and some distribution in Ontario really is.

Let's start by looking at how Hydro One, the unloved product of the public sector just a few years ago, has evolved. Today, Hydro One serves some 13 million customers. It has assets valued at \$34.5 billion. Since its restructuring a few years ago, Hydro One has focused on four key priorities: its customers' well-being, operational excellence, innovation in its sector, and growth. The utility sector in North America is consolidating rapidly. We can expect to see utilities with a market capitalization of more than \$100 billion within several years. As of this week, Hydro One's market capitalization is quoted at \$13.6 billion, with its shares trading in the \$23 range. It's paying an annual dividend of about 3.86%, and there are 595 million shares outstanding.

Let us look at what the NDP is asking Ontarians to do. If the NDP advocates repurchasing all outstanding Ontario shares, they are saying that they want to spend somewhere between \$14 billion and \$20 billion in public funds in an unwelcome takeover of a profitable and well-run publicly traded company. They can be certain that current holders of Hydro One shares will demand a premium price to be bought out. Add to that the legal challenges and the fees that would go with this unnecessary waste of public money.

That means that the NDP's unexplained budget hole is almost the same size as the Conservative budget hole in their 2018 plan. It looks like the only party that can keep tabling a balanced Ontario budget and begin to pay down the accumulated provincial debt continues to be the Liberals.

Let me review and update some of the things I said to this motion the last time that we discussed it, in March 2017. "Today's opposition motion is a self-inflicted testament by Ontario's New Democratic Party on exactly why they remain manifestly unfit for government in this province. The NDP policy behind this motion is ideologically driven, dead wrong, unworkable, counter-productive, wasteful, confrontational, against Ontario's best interests...."

1630

The NDP seem to want to own and politically manipulate everything that generates and transmits electricity. This would require capital and borrowing that would divert money away from highways, universities, schools, hospitals, water systems, bridges and other facilities that Ontarians need to have built—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

I'm going to clarify something for the third party. First of all, if the member used the word "stupid," he wasn't referring to an individual, he was referring to a plan. There's nothing I can do about that, number one. Number two, they were remarkably kind and quiet when you did your thing. Now some of you aren't even in your seats and you're being very verbal. I think you should at least give them the benefit of the doubt on the loudness, because they were polite when you were speaking. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. Let's start over.

The NDP seem to want to own and politically manipulate everything that generates and transmits electricity. This would require capital and borrowing that would divert money away from highways, universities, schools, hospitals, water systems, bridges and other facilities that Ontarians need to have built, repaired or renewed.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor West will get back in her seat, if she wants to talk; next time she'll be warned. I think I made it quite clear the first time. I'd hate to step it up, but if I have to I will. It works for everybody here—all three parties.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Those of us who live and work in the GTA can plan on choking on motor vehicle traffic, driven by NDP ideology, if those billions of dollars to renationalize Hydro One were yanked away from urban renewal, public transit, education and health care.

The NDP have no plan to build the extra power generation, transmission and distribution that Ontario's growing economy requires. They might propose buying that power at several times what it costs to generate it here in Ontario, and send even more Ontario money into Quebec or to pollution-producing coal plants in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia.

The difficulty with that strategy of spending Ontario money in Quebec and in US states is that Quebec is actually short of electricity in the winter and buys it from Ontario, and the US states bordering us in the Great Lakes basin are, like Ontario itself 20 years ago, losing the ability to generate electricity themselves as their nuclear and coal-burning stations reach the end of their service lifetimes, with no plans to replace them. In fact, a new lakebed transmission corridor under Lake Erie will carry even more electricity from Ontario to the Great Lakes states, through Michigan, and will enhance Ontario's existing power-export surpluses, which have totalled about \$1 billion in the last four years.

The NDP makes a wild, reckless and unsubstantiated claim that allowing electricity distributor Hydro One access to capital markets through a partial privatization is a bad idea. In fact, it's an inspired and progressive idea. Hydro One's share proceeds have brought in more than forecast, and allowed Ontario to have some \$9 billion in capital to modernize how we move in our urban areas.

The NDP's repeated incorrect assertions about Hydro One assume that Hydro One will never change in any material way, that Hydro One will never get any better, any more efficient or any more effective than what it is now or what it was when its shares first traded about a year ago.

The NDP assume that the best way to oversee and regulate Hydro One is by political directives that arise from politically motivated questions in this Legislature. This is clearly nonsense that not even the NDP's most ideologically devoted could support if they thought it through.

Hydro One is now overseen by the same entity—the Ontario Securities Commission—that regulates banking, telecommunications, railways and industry in Canada. The Ontario Securities Commission requirements and enforcement have teeth. Every quarter, publicly traded companies need to comply with tough disclosure rules and to report to shareholders.

As well, Hydro One no longer needs to go cap in hand to the Legislature to raise capital and to claim dividends from its profit stream. Those dividends now flow to Ontario investors, the province being by far the largest, to Ontario pension funds and to Ontario investors needing a secure stream of income, people like us with our savings and our retirement plans.

To recap a key point, Hydro One's ownership, whether public or private, does not affect electricity rates one bit. Hydro One does not set electricity rates. Hydro One does not generate electricity or decide where electricity comes from or goes to. Hydro One is a common carrier of electricity, just like a trucking company. Its distribution market share in the province of Ontario is about 24%.

There are, in fact, three such large distribution companies whose market share combined is more than 80%. The largest of them, by a small margin, is Hydro One. Second-largest is Toronto Hydro, and the third is the newly merged company called Alectra—publicly traded—which combined Enersource and several other distribution companies, including Hydro One Brampton, PowerStream, Horizon Utilities and others. Alectra serves nearly one million customers in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.

Some 67 other distribution companies operate the same way. Their rates are set by the Ontario Energy Board. They're not set on the floor of this Legislature, nor should they be. All of these companies carry a product, electricity, whose price they do not set and whose origin and use they do not control. The NDP's assertions about the ownership of Hydro One and its impact on electricity rates are completely wrong, and they know it.

So to come back to the biggest whopper of this completely ridiculous motion, that an NDP government would, or even could, repurchase the 51% of shares of Hydro One now owned by investors. The NDP thinks, without any basis, that it could snap its fingers if in government and buy back all of the Hydro One shares at the same price they were issued. Can you just hear the gales

of laughter coming from the traders on Bay Street at that? Aside from a protracted set of expensive litigation before this wasteful scheme could even start, the NDP would face stiff fees as well, and of course the renationalization of a publicly traded company would certainly provoke a run-up of all its shares. The Ontario taxpayer would be on the hook for every dollar of those completely unnecessary costs.

So whatever figure the NDP tries to sell on the proposed renationalization of Hydro One, you should prudently double or triple it. In the end, this is a broken promise in the making, even before it's made, as no government would ever go through such a needless and wasteful renationalization, and Ontarians would not tolerate it if it were tried. Consider also that a renationalization of Hydro One means a negative return on equity, which means, in English, the NDP would manage to lose money on the \$9 billion of capital already raised. Only the NDP would come up with a scheme to lose billions of dollars trying to renationalize a profitable company and reverse a successful share issue.

Simply to set out on this predictably disastrous renationalization scheme of Hydro One says to more than half of Ontarians who live in urban areas that the NDP will bring badly needed renewal in transit and municipal infrastructure to a shuddering halt. The NDP's message to urban commuters everywhere in the GTA and in other Ontario cities is that you're going to be stuck in gridlock forever if you support this nutty scheme. That means no new tracks on the Milton line to serve Milton and Mississauga commuters. That means GTA traffic that now moves at about 24 kilometres an hour will get slower and slower, as there will be no alternative to more and more cars on the roads. The NDP, in effect, pledges to Ontario that they will pay more—much, much more—and own much less, as desperately needed transit and municipal infrastructure would never get built.

What would have happened if the NDP had done what it proposes to do now some 23 years ago when the federal government privatized CN Rail? CN Rail, like Hydro One, was a firm that public and elected officials loved to hate. Since becoming private, CN Rail was able to raise equity capital, raise it on the open market, not have to go cap in hand to Parliament. Hydro One can do likewise. In fact, it already has. CN Rail has become North America's best-run railroad. Hydro One will do likewise: get more efficient, be better run, grow in size and revenue, and be better able to evolve its business and compete in new and innovative areas. The future value of Ontario's 40% stake in a 21st-century Hydro One should easily surpass the NDP's intended retrograde, 20th-century, no-growth vestige that this opposition day motion proposes.

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If you had invested in CN Rail in the 1990s and held on to your investment, would you have lost money, as the renationalization of Hydro One guarantees that Ontario will? No. Your return on equity, from just the appreciation in the value of the shares and not including the stream of dividend income, would today be in the range

of 2,000%. Why shouldn't Ontarians be able to share in the benefits of a growing, more efficient and more profitable Hydro One? Why shouldn't your pension fund, mutual fund or RRSP be able to share in Hydro One's share growth and its value and its dividend income?

Your average Hydro One customer in late 2017 is paying \$600 per year less than they did last year. Hydro One's disconnection volumes are down by 68%. Accounts receivables have declined by 25%, to the lowest point in the corporation's recent history. This is not the same Hydro One its customers had known in the past.

Hydro One's acquisition of Avista has enabled Ontario to add value from revenues in five Pacific Northwest states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. Avista had a number of acquisition suitors. Avista chose Hydro One. It was a willing marriage, not an arranged one, and not a hostile takeover. Avista also generates renewable power and distributes natural gas. Avista serves more than two million retail and industrial customers.

Hydro One was able to raise \$1.2 billion for its Avista transaction on the open market. It didn't need to come to the province for its merger money. Standard and Poor's has confirmed an "A" rating for the transaction. Hydro One is now one of North America's top 20 regulated utilities.

This NDP opposition day motion was dumb and well worthy of defeat back in March of this year, and it is doubly so now. This motion richly and truly deserves to go down to ignominious defeat yet again, and it is why you should never, ever trust the NDP with either money or electricity. I urge the members of this House to vote it down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's an honour to rise and speak to this motion brought forward by the third party here this afternoon. As I begin the response of Her Majesty's official opposition, I actually want to highlight the fact that this may well be our final Hydro One debate in this Parliament. Sure, we'll have some sparring in question period, but this could be the last actual debate on Hydro One.

While no one wants to count their chickens before they hatch—and with the surprises that the Hydro One sale has offered up, we've got enough chickens to supply Swiss Chalet for quite some time here—it's fair to say that the Hydro One sale, as a part of the government's larger mismanagement of the electricity sector, has been a key issue of this 41st Ontario Parliament.

I want to thank my colleagues from the third party, the members for Hamilton Centre and Toronto–Danforth, for presenting us with another opportunity to debate this issue here today. The member for Toronto–Danforth and I have been working shoulder to shoulder over the last 10 months or so in opposition on the Hydro One sale, and I can say that, over that time, I've come to believe that he is quite earnest in his beliefs. We don't agree all of the time. Sometimes we disagree quite profoundly, but I believe that he's sincere in where he stands on this issue.

One thing that we agreed on this in this Parliament is the fact that Hydro One never should have been sold—Hydro One never should have been sold. True, the company had serious customer service problems, and I was actually quoted in the headlines of the *Belleville Intelligencer*, saying that heads needed to roll at Hydro One because of some of the problems that were happening with the company. Many companies do have those types of problems, and that calls for a much-deserved management change. It's true that the company had technology problems and capital expenditure problems, and that means it needed to be better run, not sold.

How the government went about privatizing this was a disaster. One need look no further than the fact that prior to the initial public offering, that first IPO, the government hired the current management team and they set their compensation packages rather than having the board of directors do so, as would typically be the case in a scenario like this. It was the government who set those massive executive compensation packages. As a result, Ontario ratepayers are now paying for a CEO who makes six times what the old CEO used to make. That's six times what the old CEO at Hydro One used to make; four times what the CEO of OPG makes, and he operates actual generators, two nuclear facilities and dozens of hydroelectric facilities. It's eight times what the CEO of Hydro Quebec makes, and the CEO at Hydro Quebec is responsible for the entire system in Quebec. Anyone would have benchmarked that salary against others in the electricity industry and said it was ludicrous to pay that much, but here we are today with those salaries in place at Hydro One.

But the past, however poor it was as an exercise in public policy, isn't what we're here to talk about today. What we're here to talk about today is whether it's feasible to buy it back and whether doing so will actually save Ontario ratepayers from the massive rate increases that are coming their way as part of Hydro One's distribution rate application. On both accounts, this motion does come up short on that measure.

Let's deal first with the idea that somehow it's a desirable public policy measure to reacquire what is presently 51% of Hydro One. According to the government's releases, the sale of Hydro One has made about \$9 billion for government coffers. We don't yet have the financial numbers for the final sale so that we can check Liberal math, which of course is something we always want to do because, after all, it's Liberal math, Speaker. We're just going to assume they can read what's put in front of them.

Shares of Hydro One were primarily pitched to large institutional investors like pension plans, banks and mutual funds—big institutions. They're the kinds of investors who like the predictable dividends that usually come from utility stocks, but they're also just as capable of reading the market as the government is. Once the government of Ontario announces its intention to buy back those shares, then the price of those shares is going to jump dramatically.

Let's run two scenarios. Let's assume that it's a straight transaction using the current Hydro One dividend to gradually buy back the \$9-billion value of the outstanding shares. The current market capitalization for the whole company is about \$14 billion, and we don't yet have numbers from the final sales tranche that occurred in May. Even accounting for increased dividends as the purchase of the shares progresses over time, and the province's share of the ownership stake goes up and the stock price never, ever changing, this is still a transaction that takes the better part of two decades to accomplish.

Because we live in the real world and stock prices do change and capital expenditures eat into dividends, let's run a more realistic scenario. In its submission to the Ontario Energy Board, Hydro One demonstrated that it has more transmission infrastructure that has reached or passed its end-of-service life this year than at any point in its history. That's astounding, but it also points to a huge capital expenditure issue that is unaccounted for in the motion and for which the motion intends to make the taxpayers of Ontario solely responsible for. That could certainly extend how long the buyback of these shares would take, and it would also almost certainly impact how much could be purchased in any given year.

With regard to the volatility in the market, once you guarantee a buyer with deep pockets like the government is absolutely going to buy shares, then you increase the price. In some cases, you would increase the price substantially.

Let's say the motion were to be put into effect and the market and the current shareholders were immediately made aware that the government was absolutely going to buy back every share it could with the current dividend of \$350 million. The easiest way to do that would be to approach one of the largest institutional investors in the company and buy their stake back. That shareholder isn't going to sell at cost, and each time a tranche of Hydro One has been sold, the price has been around \$22 to \$23. The price at close of business yesterday, for example, was \$22.86.

Now, there are two ways that these shares could be bought. They could gradually be accrued over time at the market rate when available shares come on the market. The problem with this is twofold. The first is that it's slow. Buying the shares back in smaller tranches, which you could do if you were interested in keeping the price paid per share down, takes more time. The second—if you read the excellent book *Flash Boys*, by Moneyball author Michael Lewis—is that large share purchases don't go unnoticed in the marketplace. The way high-frequency trading works is that large purchases of shares have an instant impact on price. Trying to use the entire Hydro One dividend to buy as many shares as you could at one time would create a price spike for that stock. It doesn't have to be a big price spike; it could, for example, just be something in the neighbourhood of 15%.

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At 15%, as of yesterday's stock price, you would have added just over \$3 a share to each share. Before anyone

pretends that's not possible, that's exactly what the Hydro One stock traded at from July 8 to September 30 of 2016. It's very much possible. So the cost of buying the shares back now costs you another \$1.35 billion more than originally budgeted for. That's roughly four Hydro One dividends that end up paying just for the profit on the sale. And that's if you only account for a modest profit margin. It could easily be more, and it likely would be.

The other option, of course, is that the third party could arrange for a private transaction with a shareholder, but at that point you're going to pay at least that 15%.

All of this is to say that if this were a serious policy, you would have to budget closer to \$11 billion to pull it off, at least. There's also a very high potential that it will be substantially more than that, Mr. Speaker.

Or you can do what we're proposing. Yes, selling off Hydro One was an awful idea. Buying it back is ridiculously expensive and it will take forever to execute. That's why we believe in the People's Guarantee—that we use the dividends that are coming back to the province, \$350 million per annum, and take that off of electricity customers' bills so that they can get the break that they need. That's part of our plan to reduce the cost of hydro by 12%.

Thanks for your time, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in favour of this motion.

I want to note, Speaker, just listening to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, that thick fog of obfuscation that surrounded this whole matter that he sort of let slip out through the seats and the aisles in this chamber. That wasn't a new fog of obfuscation. No, Speaker.

For my sins, in the spring of 2014 I was asked to go to a presentation at the Empire Club by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sousa. You go on these things and you never know what you're going to find. What I found was the Minister of Finance talking about how he was going to maximize return on Hydro One. I think the quote was that he was going to "sweat the asset." I was in the back talking to the reporters. We were all looking at one another, and they were saying, "He's going to sell it off." I said, "Yes, he's going to sell it off. That's what's going on." At the end of his speech, when he went for the obligatory scum, reporters were gathered around: "Are you going to sell it off, Minister?" "Oh no, no, no. We're going to treat this fine. We're going to get maximum value for the people of Ontario." Never a mention, Speaker. Never a mention.

Just today, I came across an article in the *Financial Post*. In January and February of 2014, about five months before the election, the Liberals were polling in Ontario on the sell-off of Hydro One. They found that 75% of Ontarians were opposed to the sell-off. Now, I want to say to all of you who are here now, because I went through that election, the Liberals never once said they were going to sell it off. Not once. Because if they had, their carefully nurtured image of being progressive would

have blown up in their face. It just was not there, Speaker. It was simply not there. They were denying to the faces of the people of Ontario something they were already polling on because they were intent on doing that, absolutely intent on doing that.

This is a process that has been steeped in misinformation from day one. After the election, in the fall of 2014, our leader, Andrea Horwath, was asking questions of Kathleen Wynne about privatization. Kathleen Wynne was dismissing those questions: They were ridiculous, had nothing to do with reality. But, Speaker, I talked to people in the energy sector, and all over the place people knew what was bubbling, what was simmering on the stove. The sell-off was on its way.

These folks, the Liberals, don't even want to use the terms "sell-off" or "privatization." They use the totally bizarre phrase "broadening ownership," when in fact the 13 million or 14 million people of Ontario owned it and now that 13 million or 14 million own a much smaller part of it and a much smaller group owns the majority of shares.

Speaker, we have had wild claims from the Liberals about the impact of a sell-off, telling us all that there would be a long-term reduction in rates—not what we've seen in any application to the Ontario Energy Board. In fact, the most recent request was for a 20% increase in rates over the next four years. Extraordinary, Speaker; extraordinary.

There was this claim that with 40% ownership, the government would still control Hydro One. People will remember that. You and I went to school, Speaker. I had a fourth grade teacher who told me that six was bigger than four, that if I had 60% of something, I'd have more power than someone who had 40%, and that's the reality. Whenever we ask this government to do something about the bad practices at Hydro One, we're told, "No, leave it to the Ontario Energy Board. Leave it to the market." They're not going to touch it because, frankly, their only interest has been to sell it off so they had the money to make the books look good for the next election. That is not a good reason to sell off a critical piece of Ontario's infrastructure, one that has been really essential to the development of an industrial society, a wealthy society here in Ontario.

I know my time is limited, but I just want to say, at the time of sale, \$2.6 billion was given as a tax gift to the newly privatized Hydro One—\$2.6 billion. Everyone in this chamber knows what you could do with \$2.6 billion in terms of schools, roads, health care, social services. It's not an infinite amount of money, but you know, \$2.6 billion you actually can do something useful with. In the normal course of events, any tax break that comes to a participant in the electricity market like this would stay with the ratepayers. In fact, the Ontario Energy Board has said that part of that \$2.6 billion would.

Now, I think they're wrong. I think it should have been 100%, but they said 29%. Hydro One is fighting them on that, taking them to court, saying, "We deserve all that money." What we're seeing is this huge transfer

of wealth from the people of Ontario to a small number of investors.

The Liberals can say whatever they want about privatization. We understand, and the majority of people in this province understand, this is about making the rich much richer—much richer—and the rest of us poorer. That is the heart of it.

Buying it back? Not an easy thing, but a doable thing. Frankly, this is a profitable corporation which will generate profits for many years to come, allowing us to pay for those assets and bring them back in-house so we will then be able to generate money for what we need done here in this province.

The argument is clear. The necessity is clear. The Liberals have been totally wrong on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?
M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui en qualité de secrétaire parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie pour corriger quelques petites assertions qui se trouvent dans la motion.

I want to go back to the motion in front of us. I was elected last year—and part of it is that I think it's very important that Ontarians know how the system works, and that we correct mistakes or things that have been said that maybe are slightly incorrect.

First, I want to talk a little bit about why I understand that the structure of Hydro One was changed and the benefits that this allotted to Ontario. Secondly, I want to talk about the way in which the rates are fixed in Ontario, how they are set, and the fact that it has nothing to do with who owns the shares of Hydro One. Finally—I think that's the most important part for me—I want to talk about the future of electricity in Ontario, because we should look to the future and not go back in the past. We are where we are, and we have to look to and harness what the future holds for the energy sector in Ontario and ensure that it benefits all Ontarians.

Before I go to my first point, I want to make sure that Ontarians are reminded exactly about the structure at Hydro One. By law, the government must retain at least 40% of the shares. By law, no other shareholder can own more than 10%. Hydro One continues to belong to Ontarians in that way, and the profits that it makes return to Ontario taxpayers.

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In addition, by law, the government of Ontario appoints 40% of the board of directors, and two thirds of the board are necessary to make any major decision. Do I agree that more muscle could be exercised in that structure? Certainly, but I think by law there is quite a bit of protection here.

My understanding is that there was a big recession in 2007 and 2008, and it required strong action by government. Some governments—not progressive governments—decide to do nothing in the context of recessions; others think that there is a role for government in investing, in creating and in getting ourselves out of the recession. This is exactly what was aimed to be done

here. The point of it was to get out of this recession by investing in the economy, particularly in infrastructure. Construction of needed roads, transit, schools and hospitals stimulates the economy. They create jobs, because there's money that's rolling around in the economy.

Now, where do you find the money to stimulate the economy? That was the question. One way was to unlock the value of assets, as was explained by the MPP for Mississauga–Streetsville. One of the views, after lots of consultations, was to look at different assets and see where the possibilities were of liberating some cash so that it could get into the economy. This expert advice was followed, and I think that's why our economy now is doing well, because we took the opportunity to invest and unlock the value of this asset to be able to invest in transit and other major infrastructure projects that have helped grow the Ontario economy.

In a way, I think the best possible outcome was exactly where we are today, which is that we have an economy that's growing, and we have infrastructure that has helped us get there. It has allowed Ontario to have one of the most ambitious projects of infrastructure building ever in its history: \$160 billion over 12 years. This is really important because it supports the creation of jobs, it supports the ability for us to continue to have an economy that grows, that offers opportunities to all people.

Many of the projects that were financed through this are actually quite important ones that will continue to benefit Ontarians for many years: \$13.5 billion has been invested in GO Transit regional express rail; there is also \$1 billion that is being invested in the infrastructure for the Ring of Fire; and the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund—which is important for me, because it's a community infrastructure fund—is being tripled by 2018–19, to reach \$300 million. Communities can apply to it to really help them deliver what they want to deliver for their community—such an important investment. And in my own city of Ottawa, \$1 million will support phase 2 of the Ottawa LRT expansion.

This is important. That's why it was done, and that's why it was a good decision. We would not be in this place but for the way in which the structure of Hydro One was done. We would not have the good economy that we have now, and certainly we would not have the infrastructure that we invested in.

The second point—and I think it's very important for Ontarians to understand—is how the price of electricity, how the price that they have to pay does not depend on who owns the shares of Hydro One. It depends on the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board is an independent, impartial tribunal, a quasi-judicial tribunal where companies that deliver electricity come to get their price. They suggest the price that they want to charge, and the OEB's mandate is to protect consumers. It looks at the reasons why a company may want to increase its prices and it looks at the investment that it has made in the infrastructure. It looks at the cost of a corporation, what they have done, to then set the price. This, indeed, protects Ontario ratepayers because it ensures that there's

correlation between the investment in the system, the investment in the infrastructure of the system, and the price that is charged to customers.

Now, it is true that prices have increased. There's no doubt about that. We talked about that last week. The reason why prices have increased in Ontario is because significant costs were incurred in refurbishing the system. The elimination of coal was an objective and, indeed, it costs money to eliminate coal. There are some transition costs. Modernization of the system and eliminating or diminishing the risk of blackouts and brownouts was an objective; it required money and it required the system to be refurbished, in a way. As well, investments to reduce blackouts and generally modernize the system also had to be made.

What happened is that obviously the demand for electricity stabilized, and I think that's interesting for all of us to know. I've had the chance for the last month or so to go over many of the technical documents that surround these decisions, and I think it's interesting to recognize that our economy has changed. It used to be an economy that required a lot of energy, and maybe it's because of conservation measures or simply because it's a new type of economy—less manufacturing, more IT and more artificial intelligence. No matter what, we know that demand for electricity has more or less stabilized. In a way, it creates an interesting aspect in this system, where we have to make sure that we're willing to be there for peak demands, which in Ontario are always in the summer when people use electricity for air conditioning, but also that we recognize that because of the changes in the way the economy works, demand will not outgrow dramatically.

There's some uncertainty as to how customers will play out, how the technology will influence choices in how customers, whether big or small—industries and/or individual customers—will want to use their dollars, how they are going to use electricity in the future. There's still some uncertainty about that, but at least—I think that's where I want to go—we now have a plan to address this possible flexibility.

I am actually very pleased myself to have been part recently of the release of the long-term energy plan. I think it's very important for Ontarians to have a long-term energy plan where we can look at the different scenarios of demand facing Ontarians. The good part about the long-term energy plan is a little bit what I talked about last week: It allows more flexibility than we now have. It is agnostic as to the choice of providers that will provide the electricity. It does not presume that we want to have that amount of electricity coming from wind, solar, nuclear or hydro. It, indeed, will allow the market to compete. So in a way, I understand—I think this should reduce the cost.

It's very important to recognize the impact of the fair hydro plan as well. The fair hydro plan reduces the costs by 25% on average for customers. This is guaranteed not to increase by more than inflation for the next four years, and thereafter costs will be down because of the long-

term energy plan, because of the increase in competition between different providers, and also because we have made it a possibility to have better technology serving customers and also providers.

The last thing I'm going to say about the long-term energy plan is that it also includes a commitment to partner with indigenous communities in a true partnership, where they own transmission lines and will be actors in the production of electricity. That's an important part of the long-term energy plan, and I'm very proud of it. I think it's about time we do that in Ontario.

I see my time is running out. I simply want to say, monsieur le Président, que depuis le début de cette discussion, je veux que ce soit assez clair pour tous les ontariens et ontariennes comment les prix sont fixés en Ontario, les prix de l'électricité : ça n'a rien à voir avec qui contrôle ou ne contrôle pas Hydro One. Les prix sont fixés par le tribunal indépendant, the Ontario Energy Board, ou la commission de l'électricité de l'Ontario. C'est donc très important de corriger toute mauvaise information qui pourrait circuler à ce sujet.

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In my view, I think it's very important that we continue to have a system that responds well to the changing technology. That's important for Ontario, and that's exactly what the long-term energy plan does.

I will ask people not to vote in favour of this motion, because I think we should move forward, look to the future and look to the possibilities that the long-term energy plan offers to all of us.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're having an interesting, heated afternoon here. We're discussing the NDP's opposition day motion, as we call it, to bring Hydro One back into public hands by financing the purchase of shares using Hydro One shareholder dividends.

We know that, as the energy critic for the NDP said earlier—he estimated that 75% of Ontario residents did not support the selling of Hydro One. Unfortunately, this government felt that they had a mandate just because they won the election. They didn't have it in their platform; they didn't do any referendums or surveys, that I'm aware of; and they went ahead and sold it. So now the NDP is proposing that we should somehow find a way, using the dividends to finance it, to buy back Hydro One and re-own it.

Anybody who has ever sold a house and had seller's remorse—we often hear about “buyer's regrets,” but sellers do have remorse as well. People sometimes think they're getting a job somewhere else, or they're being transferred, or they think that they want to move to another area or a different house, for whatever reason, so they go ahead and sell their house. They're in a big rush, they get an offer—maybe the real estate agent was a little bit pushy to them—and the next thing they know, their house is sold and they have regrets. They would like to buy their house back, so they go to the people who bought their house and say, “The job offer didn't work out,” or “I found out I'm ill and I don't want to sell my

house. I'll give you the deposit back and maybe a bit of money for your troubles.” The people, of course, say no. If anything, they want \$10,000 or \$20,000—a big sum of money—in order to not go ahead with that purchase, because they do want to purchase that house, and they have the right if they have an agreement.

As our energy critic said, it would take close to 25 years, we're estimating, to achieve this, which would mean that there would be no immediate effect for rate-payers. So what good would that be, Mr. Speaker? How many elections would go by? What kind of platform do you come up with that isn't going to have any effect during your mandate, during your term?

In fact, we are proposing, through our People's Guarantee, to use those same dividends to decrease people's electricity bills right now. It comes down to—sometimes we talk about electricity rates and people will say, “There's no way to decrease electricity rates.” We know we can't decrease the actual rates. We know that we're somehow trying to find efficiencies that could maybe help, looking into green energy contracts and seeing what we can get out of them to try to decrease the rates.

But really, what the government is proposing with their, as we call it, unfair hydro plan is that they're not decreasing the rates of electricity; they're merely subsidizing it. How are they subsidizing it? Well, those same taxpayers are paying taxes just to subsidize their own hydro rates instead of just paying their own bills for hydro. Somehow the government thinks that people aren't going to wise up to that.

We know that the NDP, when Bob Rae was the Premier way back when, looked into reducing greenhouse gases. They looked into investing in a Costa Rica rainforest. They were looking to do studies on cows and the gases they emit, because somehow that was seen as a way to fight greenhouse gases.

In 2009, Smitherman was the environment minister, and he said that the Green Energy Act “will shape not only the way we do business in Ontario, but the way we think about energy and consumption.” Of course, he was right, in a way, because it caused energy rates to skyrocket, and we saw business moving south because of it.

The member from Streetsville kept calling the plan “stupid,” which I didn't think was really a parliamentary word, but it's okay if you're not describing a person, apparently. He spoke about Ontario being a business hub. It was a business hub. We're seeing a lot of the factories and companies move south, and we're no longer going to be a business hub if it continues.

The sad truth is that this government sold Hydro One and takes credit for closing down coal plants, which we had also promised to do at the same time they had promised, but now we hear that they're investing in coal plants in the United States. They're paying their Hydro One executive \$4.5 million a year, which is 10 times what Quebec pays their CEO. We've seen that the Liberals have tripled hydro bills during their few terms in office.

I think people at home are struggling. When we talk about people being able to afford houses or afford their rent, needing a job and needing a raise, the reality is that here in Ontario most people have not seen a significant raise. Certainly they're not keeping up with the cost-of-living increases, and in the meantime they're seeing their bills skyrocket. It's all very nice to help people find affordable homes, but if they can't pay the cost of electricity for that home, it's not going to help them out very much.

We on this side of the House won't be painting a very pretty picture of this motion. We don't think it's really going to help the residents of Ontario very much.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I think it's important for us to be really cognizant of the fact that the Ontario public is not listening to the language that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville was using. Quite honestly, they don't like that sanctimonious arrogance that is coming from the bullying tone of this government. Actually, they're not listening because all that they can hear is the sound of the roar of rage as they open their hydro bills, because they understand that this government has put themselves first, in front of the people we're elected to serve.

They also understand fundamentally that the sell-off of Hydro One was the largest transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector, second only to the sell-off of the 407 that was done under former Premier Mike Harris. They are recognizing that this cynical sort of tone as it relates to our intentions around reclaiming Hydro One in the best interests of the people of this province is—that there is a level of arrogance and a callous disregard even for the people of the province by this government. That is why we have brought forward this motion. We have to call this government to account for their lack of regard.

It is unbelievable on so many levels that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville can get up and talk about the environmental calling of that government when Hydro One purchased the dirty coal plant in Montana. It's very clear people do not like the fact that Hydro One, an Ontario utility, privatized now—it should not be buying a dirty US coal-fired plant, especially after they did such a colossal job of messing up the Green Energy Act. You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General has already indicated that the people of this province have spent \$37 billion more than they needed to throughout the Green Energy Act, and that's such a large number. I know it causes people great stress. As the former finance critic, I would wake up in a bit of a cold sweat on occasion when I thought about that number.

But Avista was purchased for \$6.7 billion, and Ontario is now a majority shareholder of the Colstrip coal plant in eastern Montana. So what did they get? They got an 800-acre coal ash waste pond described as a “toxic soup.” Thank you, the Liberal government. That is incredible, especially as this government has commercials running across this province, talking about how they've worked so hard to get rid of coal plants, and about clean air. I

have to tell you, people see very clearly when the Minister of Energy, Mr. Thibeault, says this is purely a “business decision” and the government is very pleased with it. How can anyone in 2017 brag about buying a toxic 800-acre coal ash waste pond? Who knew that in the activist centre of this Liberal government, which we were promised, there is a major toxic soup?

1720

Aside from Ontario being the single largest shareholder of Hydro One and buying the second-largest coal-fired plant west of the Mississippi—because I guess they think that what happens in Montana stays in Montana—it proves that the destructive actions of this government in undermining the public service and the call to action that we all feel around greenhouse gas emissions have really been a huge betrayal of trust on behalf of the people.

While it will be difficult to do, to buy back the shares of Hydro One, there certainly is a moral imperative to do so, there's an economic imperative to do so, and there is a role for legislators who are elected to put the public interest first. That is what we're trying to accomplish in this House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I too want to rise and speak. But I have to start off by talking about the member from Ottawa–Vanier and the things that she said. I know she's newer here and missed what really happened in 2011, when the Auditor General told us about the catastrophe that is the Green Energy Act and what it would do to Ontario many, many years later. In 2011, he told us this thing called the global adjustment—how it was a small part of your bill, but it was going to be growing into billions. As it turned out, if you could imagine—here we are six years later, and he forecast from a few hundred million dollars to \$7 billion or \$8 billion; he was off by only a few dollars, if you can imagine, on billions of dollars forecasting six years out. That was our former Auditor General and the exactness that he spoke of.

It's funny—the member from Ottawa–Vanier said, “Remember, there was a recession in 2008, and so we decided we'd have this sale of assets.” I'm thinking, “Well, the sale of assets wasn't even in the 2014 budget.” It spoke about one-time assets such as selling the GM shares and getting them back, and there was some property on the lakefront they were going to sell off—a couple of buildings, that type of thing. But it was really a small amount of money.

But here we are a year later, and they decided to go ahead with the sale of Hydro One, which was not in their plan, and add the billions of dollars in one-time sale of assets. We know that they used that to artificially balance their budget.

The member from Ottawa–Vanier says they sold assets to invest in the economy. She said, “We sold assets to bring cash to invest in the economy.” Well, this was to solve the 2008 recession. Meanwhile, every other province was out of recession very quickly and very early, and Ontario, the laggard that we are because of our high energy rates, ended up becoming a problem.

We also heard that we have all this surplus power because the economy changed. I can tell the member and any of the members from the Liberals, the economy changed because we have the highest energy rates and we lost 300,000 jobs in manufacturing. You killed off 300,000 manufacturing jobs. It's no big surprise that we have this change in the economy. When I hear these excuses, I'm disturbed by that.

Just to make one final point on that: They talked about, "We're going to invest all this money in infrastructure." They keep promising this, but \$6 billion remains unspent just in the period of three years.

So, Speaker, when you've got these numbers being thrown out that don't line up with facts—again, they make a great narrative, but they're not rooted in facts. The recession is over for all of these other provinces. Again, if you look in the 2014 budget, there was no mention of the selling of Hydro One as an asset. There was a very small asset sale that was to bring in a small amount of money. This was a complete change and a complete disaster.

The government continues to tell us that they have done all of these things in the hydro sector because they needed to upgrade the system. I can tell you, Speaker, again, that's anything but accurate. They tell us that they spent billions of dollars on transmission lines to upgrade the system. Well, there's a half-truth in there. They spent billions of dollars on transmission lines, but primarily that was to bring power from these far-flung wind turbines that they have forced on communities all across Ontario, especially outside of urban Ontario. That's where they spent billions. They did not spend that money to fix the system.

I actually had to chuckle, Speaker. There was a note—I have it somewhere in my desk here—where Minister Thibeault was quoted recently as saying they invested billions into modernizing the hydro system, and now that energy system has emerged as reliable. I've quoted from the Blackout Tracker Annual Report many times in this Legislature, and I'm going to do it one more time. When the government says they spent all these billions to fix the system, we know that those billions were spent on transmission lines. Here's the system today: The Blackout Tracker Annual Report—there's such a group that does this—revealed that the number of Ontario outages actually increased by 275% from just 2012 to 2015. The Auditor General, in her 2015 report, told us most of the increases come from generation and not, as the government says, from transmission.

You've got, again, a wonderful-sounding story, but a not-so-wonderful set of facts. I don't know how the Minister of Energy says, "We're the jurisdiction that led the way." Well, they led us down a path of ruin and destruction, especially for the 300 families who are out of work today.

Everyone else is trying to figure out how we did it. I can tell you how you did it: You did it by almost bankrupting the province of Ontario by co-opting Ontario Power Generation into signing off on your borrowing, which is against all generally accepted accounting princi-

ples. We can tell you how they did it, Speaker, and it's none too pretty.

Specifically to the report here, there was a hydro Hail Mary pulled off by the Liberals. We understand the boondoggle they have created, but we don't buy any of the reasons that we've heard from the government on why.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I've got a bit of a cold today, so forgive me, but I couldn't miss this opportunity to lend my voice to this energized debate over the Liberal government's years of misdirection on the hydro file.

As the third party, which has brought this motion forth today, is certainly aware of our position on the Hydro One sale, I will be speaking to the motion's direction relating to "lowering rates as the Premier promised."

Just those six words open up a Pandora's box of issues that have cemented this government's legacy on hydro, as we've watched hydro rates skyrocket while Ontario families and businesses struggle to pay the bills. Despite all of the promises from this Premier, you know as well I the truth, Speaker. You know as well as I that rates have not been lowered as the Premier has promised. In fact, after a decade and a half of Liberal governments, you know as well as I that electricity rates have risen by more than 300%, a threefold increase in just 15 years. Families actually pay \$1,000 more for electricity than they did in 2003. Under successive Ontario Liberal governments, energy affordability has gone from our province's strong suit—among the lowest rates on the continent—to some of the most expensive hydro rates anywhere in North America, rates that force families to struggle just to put food on the table and rates that force businesses to worry about how they will keep the lights on.

1730

In some cases, businesses have already made those difficult decisions. In the case of long-time manufacturers like Cambridge Towel, down the road from my office, they've been forced to turn the lights out—over 160 people out of work only months after the two area Liberal members did a photo op announcing hydro help to ease the 40-year-old company's struggle with electricity increases. Two months later, the lights were out.

Cambridge Towel's CEO said that the company chose to remain in Canada, "but there's a penalty for staying here. Higher costs."

As usual with this Liberal government, they came with too little too late, with band-aid solutions that can't mend a decade and a half of neglect.

Instead of fixing the problem, last spring Ontario businesses and families were treated to an electioneered hydro shell game that reduces bills to secure Liberal votes this year so that we can pay for those seats with jacked-up hydro bills for years to come.

The Liberal plan to lower hydro rates through extending the cost of green electricity contracts over a longer period only shifts the burden to future taxpayers: to our children and to our grandchildren. Who feels good about

handing their grandchildren the bill for this government's excess?

It's not just the Ontario PC Party calling them out on their shell game. The FAO warned us back in May that not only does the Liberal unfair hydro plan call for electricity rates to saddle taxpayers with huge costs for decades to come, but those increases will actually begin right after the next election. It's a sham—a vote-getting ploy straight from the Liberal electioneering handbook—and it's a sham that will cost Ontarians up to \$93 billion to pay off. Frankly, if the Liberals want to sell us on their desperate, futile hydro scheme, they should pay for it themselves.

If \$93 billion wasn't bad enough, the story gets worse the more you dig. Following up on FAO warnings, we heard the Auditor General tell us that some of that expense to ratepayers is due to accounting tricks costing Ontarians for the next 30 years. The auditor revealed that "the government created an unnecessary, complex financing structure to keep the true financial impact of most of its 25% electricity-rate reduction off the province's books—a decision that could cost Ontarians up to \$4 billion more than necessary in interest costs over the next 30 years."

Instead of borrowing all of the money directly to pay for their one-time rate reduction, the Liberals will have other government entities borrow at higher interest rates, adding up to \$4 billion in additional costs. Who throws away \$4 billion to pay for a short-term scheme to buy votes? Well, of course, the Ontario Liberals do.

Again, we used to have the lowest rates in all of North America, so how did we get here? How did we go from first to one of the worst? While the Hydro One sale does certainly provide concern for future rates, the question remains as to how we went from the most affordable to some of the most expensive in just over a decade.

A quick rewind of the tape points to the passage of the Green Energy Act in 2009, when the Liberal government tied ratepayers to 20-year contracts, paying out massive subsidies for wind and solar to produce power which often at times the province doesn't need. In the end, these contracts pay producers every time the wind blows or the sun shines, whether the province needs the energy or not, meaning that we often have a surplus energy situation that forces Ontario to off-load the excess on neighbourhood jurisdictions for pennies on the dollar. In effect, while we pay the premium rates, we've been helping to subsidize neighbours like Quebec and New York with our excess power, diminishing the energy costs to be passed along to their ratepayers and businesses. Then we wonder why Xstrata leaves Timmins for Quebec's lower energy rates, luring the once-670-person-strong copper operation across the border to the east. So we're left with a situation where, as electricity rates rise, manufacturers head for the exits and ratepayers across the province are faced with new surprises as bills continue to escalate, forcing many into difficult decisions.

Again, this wasn't always the way. Before 2003, Ontario energy affordability was the key to unlocking busi-

ness investment in our province and, in turn, creating jobs and driving the economy. Sadly, of course, that is no longer the case.

They say if you want to get out of a hole, you've got to stop digging. Yet we've seen nothing but digging into a hole of green energy contracts to Liberal friends who, in turn, donate to the Liberal government. While families pay \$1,000 more for electricity, the Wynne Liberals have received \$1.3 million in donations from companies that receive thousands of energy contracts.

If you want to get out of a hole, you stop digging. We need leadership from a government that will stop digging deeper with new green energy contracts that we in fact don't need. We need leadership from a government, a guarantee if you will, to stop digging into ratepayers' pockets and deliver much-needed hydro relief to families; a guarantee to lower the average hydro bill by an additional 12% and save the average household \$173 a year. That's the type of leadership we need, Speaker. Not the continued digging to pass the costs of the government mistakes on to the shoulders of our grandchildren.

I do recognize that with today's motion, the NDP is calling for action on the Hydro One sale to prevent similar further impacts on future generations. That said, I would note the somewhat bizarre record of the third party on the energy file that, while they were in government, helped bring us to where we are today. It may have been over two decades ago, but it seems like only yesterday that the Bob Rae government was making unfortunate headlines for using Ontario Hydro as a social program. It was an error that saw the NDP government propose fighting greenhouse gases by investing in a Costa Rican rainforest and studying cow flatulence. It was an era that saw electricity rates soar by 40%; admittedly, not the 300% the Liberals' legacy boasts, but significant nonetheless. As our nuclear fleet began to struggle and costs were out of control, it was an era that saw hydro's debt threaten the bankruptcy of our province.

While we certainly join with the third party in expressing our concern over the future of hydro in Ontario, we must be wary of the past concerns created by that same party that set the table for some of the costly decisions that we in fact are discussing today.

All that said, Speaker, clearly we do agree that Hydro One should have been kept in public hands. It was a sale that we argued against from the beginning and each time the government sold a new tranche. The fact is, at this point, instead of buying back shares, which has no immediate benefit to ratepayers, we need a plan that will deliver hydro relief as soon as possible. We need a plan that will actually lower people's hydro rates by returning the Hydro One dividend to the people of Ontario. We need a plan that will lower the average hydro bill by an additional 12% and save the average household \$173.

The Liberal legacy is triple the electricity rates, the Hydro One sell-off, unneeded green energy contracts and rebate shell games. If they're not prepared to turn that legacy around, we look forward to the opportunity to do it ourselves come June.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm always proud to rise in the House on behalf of the residents of the great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Since my time here, I've seen a number of pieces of legislation issued with a fancy name to give the impression of doing great things but, in fact, doing nothing or quite the opposite. This is just another one of them. The NDP are clearly taking lessons from the current government.

Buying back Hydro One shares will have absolutely no immediate impact on rates. So let's be clear: The NDP had a chance to contain Ontario's obscene electricity rates that we are seeing today, but they chose to support the government's Green Energy Act without condition, which is the largest contributor to our serious hydro cost problem.

To be fair, during the majority Liberal days, it could not stop the legislation anyway. But time after time during the minority government of 2011 to 2014, they supported this government in doubling down on the Green Energy Act and the failed energy policies.

I go back to a report written by the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers in 2011 that highlighted the technical problems of the Green Energy Act and clearly identified the problems that we are seeing today. You cannot add unpredictable and uncontrolled electricity to a system such as ours without serious problems. It's just plain physics, and the government chose to ignore it.

This government likes to talk about the knowledge society but it refuses to listen to it. So what have we seen? Twenty-year contracts being issued for expensive, intermittent and unpredictable wind and solar power that cost billions of dollars to compensate for.

1740

I have a story of a resident near my area, just outside, actually—a Liberal riding—who was lucky enough to win one of these contracts: 20 cents a kilowatt hour for solar power. He had a time limit to enter or build the system, so he chose to leave it till the end. I think they had a five-year period. He was attending a conference down in Texas and there was a discussion about the rates the people were collecting. He mentioned that he was getting 80 cents a kilowatt hour. People laughed and they questioned where you would get such a rate. He said, "In Ontario—from the government."

It just shows how ridiculous this whole plan is. These projects were forced on unwilling hosts. The government promised it would change direction and it would no longer force them onto unwilling hosts.

In my riding, the township of North Stormont declared itself formally an unwilling host, taking the government at its word. This faith in the Liberal government once again proved to be a big mistake, and it's cost them more than half a million dollars a year in lost revenue on the project.

Speaker, all over the province, communities have let this government know that they are against these projects, but they have been ignored. To make matters

worse, this policy has proven to be a disaster for the province and its residents.

The government brags about closing down coal plants, a program that was actually started by a former PC government minister, Elizabeth Witmer, with a realistic date of 2014. The Liberals, under the former Premier, scoffed at the 2014 date and promised to have them shut down by 2007. History tells us that Minister Witmer was right in listening to the experts, as the government missed their 2007 promise and their 2011 promise, barely meeting the original PC commitment of 2014.

Speaker, it goes to show what a Liberal promise is worth. Remember the signed contract not to raise taxes and how long it took them to break that promise? But more disturbing to the story is that the government continues to tell the people of Ontario that closing coal plants was due to the installations under the Green Energy Act, even though the vast majority of the installations were not even operating at the time of the closings.

If you need further proof, one needs to look at the actual green contribution to Ontario's power supply, in the order of 2% to 4%. This did not replace the 15% contribution of coal. Not included in those numbers would be the power lost when Bruce Power is ordered to blow off steam, when our dams are ordered to spill water, or when the wind turbines are ordered not to produce power. This is all power that you are dearly paying for but does not show up in the production numbers, but surely shows up on the balance sheet and must be paid for by electricity users in Ontario.

This is just another stretch goal that the Liberal government hopes the people of Ontario believe despite the evidence against it.

Let's give credit where credit is due. We have to thank Bruce Power for their contribution, as they increased their production from six to eight units, a 33% increase, enough to shut down all the coal plants, which, with the added gas plants, should have been able to meet all of Ontario's needs.

Let's not forget the Liberal government for their contribution, for it was their escalation of power costs, expensive red tape regulation and expensive policies that drove the cost of running a business so high that many businesses moved out of Ontario and actually reduced our electricity requirements. In fact, Ontario is consuming less electricity than it did in 2003, 14 years ago, when the Liberal government took over.

The president of a major automaker has reported that the government's policies have made Ontario the most expensive place in North America to run a business. We can actually see this result in Ontario moving from the number one automotive manufacturer that it was in 2003 to the number three position today.

Again, back to the society of professional engineers: They recently issued a report highlighting that these failed Liberal policies cost the ratepayers of Ontario \$1.25 billion in 2016.

I've heard the members opposite talk about stupid policies. I believe most sane people would declare the

Liberal government's policies as extremely costly and devastating to the people of Ontario and, yes, possibly stupid.

We have not only chased our well-paying jobs out of the province, we have also made it very expensive for a family to live and raise their children. We see people come into my constituency office at wits' end, not knowing how they are going to either buy food or heat their homes. Many people retired years ago with decent pensions that they thought would see them through their golden years, but this Liberal government has made these years anything but golden.

With the dire state of our electrical system that was the envy of the world before this Liberal Party took control of it, I see the NDP finally taking steps to distance itself from the policies of the Liberal government, but it is too little, too late.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I'm glad that there are a few more Liberals here this afternoon because I want to say that this is the biggest mistake in the history of the province of Ontario—the selling of Hydro One. Make no mistake about it.

I want to say to the PC Party, which took great pleasure in going after the NDP this afternoon, do they not remember Mike Harris, who started the privatization of hydro in the first place? Then I want to say, because the finance critic's here today, he signed the white paper that said that under a Tim Hudak government they'd sell Hydro One—not only that, they'd sell OPG. How do I know that? Because there's a white paper on it, and I was one of the unfortunate guys who had to run in a by-election against the PC Party in Niagara Falls. One of the big things in that by-election was that they wanted to sell off Hydro One.

Here we are, a few years later, and they're standing up and won't admit exactly what their intentions were. When you see the magazine that they handed out, whatever it was called, it wasn't surprising to me that they said that they weren't going to buy back Hydro One. I want to make sure we're very clear on exactly what happened in that party.

But I'm saying to the Liberal government very clearly: This is the biggest mistake you've ever made. I've been saying it since the day you guys announced it, so there's no surprise in that.

Now, you want to take a look at the province of Ontario. Think about this, everybody: 90% of the province of Ontario is saying, "Don't sell Hydro One." I'm going to go back to the by-election again—because you had the opportunity twice to debate me on selling Hydro One. Do you know how many times it was raised in the by-election? I'm asking the Liberal Party this: Do you know how many? None. Then, four months later, because you had the right to change your mind, you could have debated me again on selling Hydro One because I had to

run in the general election. Do you know how many times you raised it in that debate? None. So, don't stand here, like the one guy did here as he called us some names that I think weren't very complimentary, and say that you told the province of Ontario you're going to sell Hydro One. That's absolutely wrong.

Now we get into even more attacks on the residents of the province of Ontario. You have a CEO who's making \$4.5 million. Do you know what he says to seniors and single moms and single dads in the province of Ontario? That he feels our pain. Let me say to Mayo Schmidt, you don't feel anything when it comes to people choosing between taking their medication or buying groceries or making sure their kids have clothes on their backs. You don't feel our pain at all, so don't stand up and say you do.

Then, do you know what they do, because they want to make sure they give us just a little more? They want to have prepay meters put on for hydro. You get \$10 prepaid, you get 10 bucks, you put it in and then after the 10 bucks is gone, guess what they do to you? They shut off your hydro. Can you imagine? You're on dialysis and have a dialysis machine and that \$10 runs out—you have no money—and they shut it off.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That is true. It's exactly the way it is. I think it's on page 2032. Somebody said to me, "Well, it's way in the back." Do you know what I learned when I was bargaining collective agreements? Read the small print. It's really important. One word can change the entire contract.

Thank you. I appreciate your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm pleased to get up to respond to the debate that's occurred in the Legislature today. There has been some misinformation that has come forward, and I just need to clarify a couple of things.

First and foremost, there's only one party in this Legislature who has consistently been opposed to the privatization of public assets and the privatization of public services, and that's the New Democratic Party. We've been consistent since our inception, frankly. The Conservatives we know wanted to sell off our electricity system. They deregulated and privatized when they were in power. They sold off the 407. You can't trust the Conservatives not to privatize, not to sell off public assets, because they do it all the time. It's in their DNA. It's who they are.

We've watched the Liberal government sell off Hydro One. It was a mistake. It was the wrong thing to do. I agree with the member for Niagara Falls: It was absolutely the wrong thing to do.

But we can fix it. What we have to worry about are all of the new plans that the Liberals have to privatize. Our health care system is something else that they want to privatize. They want to privatize our police services.

Privatizers are the Conservatives. Privatizers are the Liberals. The New Democrats are the only party you can trust not to privatize our public assets, not to make the kinds of cuts that hurt so hard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for debate is over.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats. Members, take your seats, for the second time.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea

Mantha, Michael
Natyshak, Taras
Sattler, Peggy
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Des Rosiers, Nathalie
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad

Fedeli, Victor
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzi
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
Malhi, Harinder
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
McDonell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Milczyn, Peter Z.

Miller, Norm
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Thibeault, Glenn
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 15; the nays are 55.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Sam Oosterhoff
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley