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Thursday 7 April 2016

Jeudi 7 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I am pleased to rise today and speak about the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. Bear with me: This is one hour of Paul Miller. I hope you can handle it.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's the Paul Miller show.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's Paul Miller Live. One is already leaving.

Before I start, I'd like to welcome the new Deputy Speaker, Soo Wong.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Miller: I wish you all—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's on the side, Soo.

Mr. Steve Clark: A point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, thanks, Stevie.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. You're starting already.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I just wanted to offer our congratulations to you as well. I'm glad that the member extended his thanks to you. We're all very pleased to see you in the chair.

Applause.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: And good luck, Soo. Bless you.

The history of the bill: This bill has been incubating for a very, very long time—well before the last general election. I recall, Speaker, that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport began work on two trails-related projects in the fall of 2013.

First, they began talking about the Pan Am and Parapan trails, which were supposed to be completed in time for the Pan Am Games in the summer of 2015. The idea behind these was to close some of the many gaps in Ontario's Trans Canada Trail—about 250 kilometres in total. Once complete, we would have a continuous trail stretching over 2,000 kilometres.

Second, they commenced consultations on a new Ontario Trails Strategy. I'm pleased to see that the ministry did reach out to consult with many interested parties and stakeholders, including aboriginal groups. The problem is that, nevertheless, the consultation and communication has not been as extensive as it needed to be.

A new trails strategy is something we have needed in this province for a very long time. Also, we need the value of our trails as common public recreational spaces where we can absorb the natural world. The definition of trails includes hiking trails, pathways, snowmobile routes and more. There are 2,500 trails in Ontario, stretching over 80,000 kilometres. You have to walk around the entire world twice to reach that distance.

Trails are not just for recreational use. In northern Ontario, people often rely on trails in the absence of passable roads or highways. We cannot neglect that, and this is one of the reasons this bill is so important to the north.

This is an omnibus bill, as it establishes one new act and includes five additional schedules that amend five other acts: the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, the Occupiers' Liability Act, the Off-Road Vehicles Act, the Public Lands Act and the Trespass to Property Act.

My colleagues will know that I've never been a warm friend of omnibus bills. Having said that, this omnibus bill's objectives are coherent and consistent.

The former Speaker of the House of Commons, John Allen Fraser, ruled in favour of the definition of acceptable omnibus bills as follows: "The essential defence of an omnibus procedure is that the bill in question, although it may seem to create or to amend many disparate statutes, in effect has one basic principle or purpose which ties together all the proposed enactments and thereby renders the bill intelligible for parliamentary purposes."

The schedules of this bill do indeed have one basic purpose: "To protect and improve thousands of kilometres of the province's urban, suburban, rural and remote land and water trails network while encouraging its expansion." To this end, this bill aims to "improve, sustain and encourage the expansion of trails by addressing liability, trespassing and crown land issues."

The purpose of this bill is reasonable, Speaker. You would find few members in this House in opposition to this bill's objective. The question is of the bill's efficiency and effectiveness. Being effective is about doing the right things, while being efficient is also about doing things.

Does this bill do things right? In general I would say a qualified yes, but consultation and engagement in the communities that will be impacted by the legislation has not been extensive enough. This has created some major problems in northern and rural Ontario, most especially around the closure of some long-standing snowmobile trails this past winter.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport said this past Monday that there had been extensive consultations, and gave some brief hints at that, including a mention of five regional sessions. For legislation that could have such a profound and specific impact on northern and rural Ontario, it simply isn't enough.

Our province is enormous, with a total area of over one million square kilometres. If Ontario went on its own as a fully sovereign state, it would be the 28th largest in the world. We're bigger than Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan. In fact, Ontario is more than twice the size of Thailand or Spain—really incredible.

That really should put in perspective how utterly inadequate five regional consultations are for a bill that has its major impacts in rural Ontario. I can't imagine the people of rural Spain being happy with one consultation session on the northern coast, another on the southern coast, and maybe, if they win the flip of a coin, one more in the western mountains. It's not enough, Speaker, when you consider the size of this province and the distances involved.

I will say that I'd be very interested in seeing the complete list of consultations, as it would give an indication of where this outreach needs to go next, and would help us demonstrate to our constituents that the consultations on this bill have been in good faith and not just limited to the usual stakeholders in the Toronto bubble. It is very important that people affected by this bill feel included in the process, because without that confidence this legislation will do more harm than good. I hope that the government will come forward and share that information with the opposition critics when the time comes.

I'm encouraged to see that the legislation has been framed such that consultation is not a one-time affair. Subsequent to passage of the bill, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry will consult on a regulation defining damage to crown land and property. There will be consultations by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a process for recognizing Ontario's trails of distinction, on a voluntary classification system, on voluntary best practices and on establishing trails-related targets. On a recurring basis, the ministry will consult on the periodic review of the Ontario Trails Strategy.

This bill does have many right things with it, but some we have to look at. It promotes access and awareness of Ontario trails by making it easier for people to understand the trails available here, to understand their nature and their difficulty and by recognizing high-quality trails as trails of distinction. This is all very important, Speaker, because as of now, there is no coherent system province-wide to classify trails. Casual hikers, cyclists or ATV users have no way of definitely knowing the difficulty of a trail.

0910

This bill aims to establish greater clarity in the relationship between landowners and trail users. It allows landowners the option of granting time-limited or permanent easements. It's just an option, but it will be very beneficial to many landowners and trail users. The creation of this possibility as a supplementary mechanism will in fact serve to protect landowners.

However, Speaker, I will return to the question of easements later in this debate, because some of the omissions from the bill on this topic, as well as one questionable proposal, combined with insufficient consultation and communication, have allowed misinformation to seep into this debate and have really poisoned the well around the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. I want to take a lot of time to discuss this, Speaker, but I also want to talk first about some of the other aspects of this legislation.

Further to this, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act creates more clarity around liability on the trails. It establishes that a lower standard of care applies to occupiers of trail property which are not-for-profit or public sector organizations. This applies even if there is an incidental fee—only an incidental fee—related to access onto or use of the land, such as for parking, or if a public benefit or payment is given to a not-for-profit trail manager.

Another important change to the Occupiers' Liability Act is that the list of lands to which a lower standard of care applies is amended to add portages.

It is important to note that the standards of care themselves are not being revised.

This is a very important change, because there are two standards of care in the province under the Occupiers' Liability Act. The higher standard is that "an occupier of premises owes a duty to take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that persons entering on the premises, and the property brought on the premises by those persons are reasonably safe while on the premises." Essentially, this standard of care requires that a property owner or occupier protect a person entering his or her property from all reasonable foreseeable hazards or circumstances.

If you are a landowner voluntarily offering access to your land to a trail organization or snowmobile club, then this is a demanding standard of care. It requires a lot of time and attention and creates a liability and risk for the landowner. It is a major deterrent to landowners permitting access to their land for recreational purposes. Who can blame them for that, Speaker, really? If they don't benefit from people crossing their land, why would they want to assume the liability? It makes sense to me.

The lower standard of care under the Occupiers' Liability Act provides that the occupier owes a duty to the person who enters onto the premises "to not create a danger with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person or his or her property and to not act with reckless disregard of the presence of the person or his or her property."

The problem is that under the current statutes, there is some uncertainty over which standards of care apply to landowners who permit access to the trail.

Subsection 4(3) of the Occupiers' Liability Act states:

"A person who enters premises described in subsection (4) shall be deemed to have willingly assumed all risks and is subject to the duty of care set out in subsection (1)"—that is, Speaker, the lower standard of care I just outlined.

"(a) where the entry is prohibited under the Trespass to Property Act;

"(b) where the occupier has posted no notice in respect of entry and has not otherwise expressly permitted entry; or

"(c) where the entry is for the purpose of a recreational activity and,

"(i) no fee is paid for the entry or activity of the person, other than a benefit or payment received from a government or government agency or a non-profit recreation club or association, and

"(ii) the person is not being provided with living accommodation by the occupier."

The uncertainty in relation to trails has risen around subclause 4(3)(c)(i). To that end, the bill we'll be considering today, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, proposes to amend the Occupiers' Liability Act by inserting a subsection to clarify that the following do not constitute a fee for entry or activity:

"1. A fee charged for a purpose incidental to the entry or activity, such as for parking.

"2. The receipt by a non-profit recreation club or association of a benefit or payment from or under the authority of a government or government agency."

Speaker, this is an important amendment, because it protects landowners and trail organizations that are not profiting from the trails, that are maintaining these trails or permitting access for the public benefit. I'm encouraged that this legislation removes this uncertainty in order to protect community-minded landowners, both because this is fairer and because it will encourage more landowners to permit access to trails crossing their properties.

Outside this building, I'm not sure if anyone in urban Ontario has heard of this bill, leaving aside the minister's staffers over on Bay Street and perhaps a couple of lobbyists. It's not on the major media's radar all—it will be. I give credit: There was one article in the London Free Press. But the lack of coverage is a bit of a shame, because not only does this bill affect urban and suburban residents, but our media should be covering stories of special importance to rural Ontarians. In this case, it hasn't made the major newspapers' priority list yet, but that doesn't mean that it hasn't made it into any newspapers. I may have missed a few articles in newspapers, but I have columns and news pieces on this bill in the Cornwall Standard Freeholder, in the Bracebridge Examiner, the St. Catharines Standard, the Pembroke Daily Observer and the Manitoulin Expositor.

Some of the commentary has been well-informed. Others, unfortunately, have been influenced by the incredibly misleading statements and commentary put out by the Ontario Landowners Association. I really want to commend the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for speaking loudly and forcefully against this misinformation, because we know of his roots in this organization. The member said:

"Bill 100 does not grant any new authorities over private land, nor does it infringe or impair private property rights. It is indeed unfortunate that the OLA"—a landowners' group—"does not have people who are knowledgeable providing advice to them.

"They're suggesting that easements can be imposed on private landowners, and nothing could be further from the truth. It's not based on fact."

I couldn't agree more with the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. This misinformation has had some very detrimental effects already on people in northern and rural Ontario. We've had enough trouble with trust in government—much of it is caused by the numerous scandals surrounding the Liberal government—without people spreading patently wrong information and casting aspersions on constructive and well-intentioned legislation. We may as well close up shop and sell off the furniture here if people start believing that nothing can be done in this government or this building.

As my colleague from Nickel Belt said a couple of weeks back, the way this bill is being interpreted is very problematic and is creating great difficulties in rural Ontario, but most particularly in parts of northern Ontario.

A lot of land in the north is owned by private landowners, mainly farmers. The trails in northern Ontario are so important in winter. They are vital recreational resources for the people who live there, but they are also some of the biggest generators of winter tourism activity. The misinformation being spread has led worried landowners to cut off access to trails used for years—years—by snowmobile clubs and others. Agreements have been cancelled in Port Carling, in Athens and Gananoque.

There have been problems all over northern Ontario, in Manitoulin and Nickel Belt, among other places. What happens to tourism in northern Ontario if all the snowmobile trails, ATV trails and hiking trails start shutting down? It's not going to be good. It's going to be ugly. It will be bad for a whole lot of businesses, recreational, food service, accommodation, gas stations, not to mention all the other jobs that are supported by the spending of the people who work in these businesses. We need to protect jobs in the north. They have been hit hard already. We need to ensure that the north retains a viable tourist economy; it helps to protect the northern way of life.

This bill is well-intentioned. It is a piece of legislation that has been, if not needed, then desirable in this province for some time, to bring clarity and protection to the relationship between landowners and trail users and to expand the number of trails available in Ontario. It is something that I think needs some amendment at committee and certainly some very wide consultation, but it should be supported in getting there in this second reading at least. The NDP supports the objectives of the bill because we want to see trails improved, maintained and expanded. By addressing liability, trespassing and crown use issues, the legislation is targeting important areas to achieve those goals. It is good that this bill provides the trails community with improved and expanded tools to develop, operate and promote trails.

0920

It is important to remove barriers in order to connect and expand trails across this province. It is of great benefit to trail users and local tourism that this bill enables the recognition of trails of distinction and, for the benefit of local communities, the creation of a voluntary classification system and voluntary best practices. A classification system will also help users to find trails that match their interests and ability.

The misinformation that has been spread about this bill has created fear, Speaker—fear. It has had some very negative knock-on effects for northern Ontario that need to be arrested now, but only the government has the ability to do this.

I would like to see the bill move through the legislative process, but what I would like to see most of all is for the ministry to reach out to the public, explain what the bill is really about and talk to the people impacted one to one about their concerns, because trust in the government is probably at an all-time low, I'm sorry to say.

If people start hearing that the government is effectively going to take the land, they get very anxious. They get scared—quite rightly, too; wouldn't you? The government is not taking anyone's land with this bill. There is an option in here for the landowner to grant easements—an option only, Speaker; not a law, just an option.

There is a very long list of bodies eligible to have easements assigned to them. The bill sets out an eligible body as:

"(a) the crown in right of Canada or in right of Ontario,

"(b) an agency, board or commission of the crown in right of Canada or in right of Ontario that has the power to hold an interest in land,

"(c) a band within the meaning of the Indian Act (Canada),

"(d) an aboriginal community or organization prescribed by the regulations made under this act,

"(e) a municipality within the meaning of the Municipal Act, 2001,

"(f) a conservation authority established under the Conservation Authorities Act,

"(g) a board within the meaning of the Education Act,

"(h) a corporation incorporated under part III of the Corporations Act or part II of the Canada Corporations Act that is a charity registered under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

"(i) a trustee of a charitable foundation that is a charity registered under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

"(j) a prescribed donee under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

"(k) a qualified organization, as defined under section 170(h) of the Internal Revenue Code (United States) and Treasury Reg 1.170A-14 (United States),

"(l) a corporation created by statute that is a registered charity under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

"(m) any other person or body prescribed by the regulations made under this Act...."

This list demonstrates that the easements need not be granted to the government. The list of eligible bodies is quite extensive and inclusive. The easements may be permanent or they may be time limited. Schedule 1, section 12, subsection 9 states:

"An easement is valid for the term specified in it. The term must be specified as a period of months, years or in perpetuity."

That means that it's up to the landowner what he wants to do. That's good, because it allows a lot more flexibility for the landowner and for the users, but it also doesn't allow wasteful ideas such as a four-day or two-week easement hearing. The months provision is clearly intended to allow a landowner and eligible bodies to come to an arrangement covering one activity season, be it snowmobiling season or summer activity season.

So whether an easement is perpetual or term-limited is the decision of the landowner. Let me make this clear: It's up to the landowner, not these rumours that have been floating around that they're going to take somebody's land or they're going to confiscate trails. It's a load of baloney.

Time for another water break. Jeez, Speaker, only another 38 minutes. I'm flying here.

So too is the decision over whether or not to grant an easement at all. No landowner has to give any land away. No landowner will have their land forcibly taken. This bill is meant to reconcile the interests of the landowners and the trail users. It does that by providing a greater, stronger protective framework for both landowners and trail users, but that framework is of no use if people do not see it or if people don't understand it.

People have to communicate. As the member from Leeds–Grenville said earlier in the debate, the agreements reached between the trail users and landowners are very delicate.

The interpretations of these arrangements are very delicate. All of us in this House, I think, have a responsibility to stand up against the spread of incorrect interpretations that are endangering this delicate balance and these delicate agreements because, if it isn't stopped, then, trail act or no trail act, communities up north are going to suffer.

I might have a tendency to say that the member from Leeds–Grenville might be just kind of creating a bit of a buzz about the negativity of this. It's not negative.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture does not support every aspect of this bill, primarily around what they see as vague best practices for trail operators and what they believe are insufficient fines for trespassing. But they're not against it, Speaker. We know that it has been a concern of theirs for many years now and that some of the members of the PC Party have felt the same way. The member from Dufferin–Caledon introduced such a bill in the fall of 2014, I recall. Despite not agreeing with every aspect of Bill 100, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has publicly and repeatedly assured farmers that easements under this bill are "completely voluntary," despite all the rumours that are being created by certain individuals.

I think it is important that all of us in this House reiterate and clarify, clearly and loudly, and read into the record the agreement of multiple sources. I'll repeat what the OFA has stated: "Section 12 of this legislation is clear that an owner's decision to enter into a trail easement is their own choice and is completely"—I repeat, completely—"voluntary. The legislation clearly states a landowner may grant"—may grant—"an easement to allow use of their property and have the right to state the length or term of that agreement. That means Ontario farmers and rural property owners will retain a choice and should not feel obligated to enter into any easement agreement for recreational trail use" if they're uncomfortable or they feel that they might have a liability, which they won't, but some people are going around saying that all these things are going to happen. I'm saying it for the TV audience and I'm saying it for this Legislature: It's a load of rubbish. It's not going to affect them.

To bring something concrete to this discussion—not that I want to be mistaken for a trail paver—I'd like to speak for a few minutes about some problems we've been having with trails in my community, difficulties that unfortunately this bill will do nothing to address. This is despite the problems having been caused at the provincial level.

We have a beautiful beachfront and waterfront trail in Hamilton. If you haven't been there, you really should make the effort this spring or summer to use it. The city of Hamilton and local communities invested years and years of effort and quite a number of dollars into beautifying this long trail, which runs right along the length of my riding, along the shores of Lake Ontario and on towards Grimsby.

It's not well known outside of the area, which we can safely say is true of most trails, but like most trails, it is cherished by the local community as a place to walk, cycle, jog, walk their dogs and get away from it all, right by the lake—a place to exercise; a place to relax. A few months ago, just before the holidays, Hydro One crews came in and started tearing up trees. They clear-cut the trees along the beach trail and sprayed herbicide all over the place to make sure the trees don't come back. Great. Thanks a lot. Hydro One has left stumps of what was once a prized Hamilton attraction—beautiful trees. They cared nothing for our longest and proudest trail. There has been absolutely no accountability.

As I said, the city of Hamilton had invested years in beautifying this trail for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The city offered to maintain the trees along the beachfront trails at its own expense, but its offer was ignored, Speaker. Hydro One knows better. They're clear-cutting. They're cutting down trees they don't even have to cut down because there's some North American act, because years ago—remember the big blackout when, I think it was, a squirrel caused a big blackout in Ohio and knocked out half of the eastern corridor? A squirrel did that on a transformer in Ohio.

Those days have changed. We've come a long way since then, but Hydro One now has to follow a North American line act where they have to clear out so many metres underneath or close to lines in case of ice storms or whatever. That's understandable. Trim them way back. Trees take five to 10 years to grow before they become a problem. You could cut them back or cut the ones that are directly under the towers—it's understandable—or the ones that may fall into the towers. I don't have a problem with that. But you don't have to cut 50 metres on either side of it. It also acts as a buffer for some highways like the Red Hill Expressway; now they don't have a buffer from the noise because all the trees have been cut down. The neighbours are in an uproar, and they've even hired a lawyer.

0930

"But we're Hydro One, so we've got to follow the law and do what we're told to do." That's the way it is: "You're out of luck. Tough luck." It's not good, Speaker. It's causing a lot of aggravation.

We may be talking a good game about trails in this Legislature. I think that the protection of our trails is something that members on all sides of the House can agree on. But what happens when our natural environment and people's public interest in recreational trails collide with big money, hydro and their rules? Make no mistake, Speaker, now that Hydro One has been partially privatized and now that the government has taken great pains to remove all lines of accountability, Hydro One is big money, big say and big power. It's not a public institution anymore.

Not only are prices going to go up for our hydro, but we're losing control over our environment and what surrounds the power usage and the towers. We're losing more control, because big business can hire big lawyers. It may not be too late to save if the government corrects their course, but as it stands today, Hydro One is all about the mighty dollar.

You see, Speaker, the reason why Hydro One has been slashing and burning the trails is that it's looking to save a few bucks. It's all about money. They don't want to have to come in there every three or four years and trim. They want it for every 20 years or 15 years, so they don't

have to come back. That's ridiculous. You're ruining beautiful trees and the environment, because you don't want to pay to come back and trim every five or 10 years. You don't want to do that. For the amount you're saving, the amount of pleasure that you're taking away from the public is unacceptable.

The Auditor General reported that Hydro One has been cheapening out on its vegetation management cycle, operating on a nine-and-a-half-year cycle, as I said, as opposed to the average three-to-five-year cycle of all its peers and everyone else. Instead of trimming trees selectively and responsibly, Hydro One has, under the watch of the government, allowed trees to grow wild for nine years—under the watch of this government—then razed them when a critical Auditor General report was looming.

There's no accountability, Speaker—none. Hydro One told our constituents to go to the Ontario Energy Board if they've got a problem. Good luck. The Ontario Energy Board told them that, thanks to the government, they no longer have any authority over these matters. It's up to Hydro One. Wow. So any appeal body that we had is toast. They shrugged their shoulders. They threw my constituents back on the good graces of Hydro One. How did they make out? Not too good. The Ministry of Energy has nothing to say, because they say Hydro One is no longer a public institution. So you can sing for it. Have a good song, and so on.

The circle continues, and all the while, Hydro One has been getting its red pen out to target any other trails they can find in my riding, like the one along the beautiful Red Hill Valley. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. Hydro One has not only razed the trees along the beachfront trail; it has sprayed large quantities of herbicide just a few metres from the shoreline. Isn't that wonderful? You've got kids playing down there; you've got people walking their dogs; you've got other animals—creatures of our society, our world—being affected by these herbicides. They're spraying it all over the place. I don't know.

I remember, Speaker, years ago up north, they were using—are you ready for this one? Like in the war in Vietnam, they were using Agent Orange all over the sides of highways up in northern Ontario. Are there long-term effects on people? Probably, and definitely on animals and creatures. Is there going to be a latency period for cancer? Probably. Lovely.

It's not just Hamilton, Speaker. The problem reaches far and wide. I know they've been in Guelph where they wrecked the Royal Recreational Trail, turning a tree-shaded walkway into a grassland which turns brown by July. It's not too pretty. This may or may not be something that can be incorporated into this bill, but the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport needs to get a handle on this kind of reckless destruction. Put this into our trail strategy. It might be a good idea to protect some of these beautiful God's creations. Make sure that our trails are protected from the carelessness and penny-pinching actions of both private corporations and public institutions. Demand an accounting from Hydro One of the similar clear-cutting of trails in this province.

This government needs to find a way to ensure that instead of stiffing municipalities and local residents, Hydro One works in co-operation with them and uses responsible tree management practices to protect our natural heritage, amenities, as well as the integrity of our power transmission system in this province. These goals do not have to be in constant opposition. Trails are very vulnerable, fragile things.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a lot of chatter in this corner. The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister over there is talking, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a lot of chatter here. I would respectfully ask the members on the government side to please tone down, because we have a debate going on this side. This I respectfully ask.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well done, Speaker. Maybe they want to listen about trails in their area but they seem not interested. Oh, well.

Trails are vulnerable, as I said. Trails are very long, narrow lines that thread through our entire province. All it takes is one anxious landowner to close a part of a trail to break that thread. Depending on the location, the trail could be permanently severed into two. Most likely, if one landowner is worried, others are too and they're watching very closely. Pretty soon, you'll have other landowners saying, "Hey, why am I leaving myself vulnerable when my neighbours are taking steps to protect themselves?" Then you're cutting the thread in multiple locations, not just one. We may not have a usable trail anywhere anymore. It might be too fragmented, especially if goes through difficult terrain that's not very accessible by good roads.

We need to understand that there's a pre-existing ecosystem here. The government needs to understand that. Even just the perception that this negotiated co-existence, a web of mutually beneficial but individual and distinct agreements, is going to be replaced with a hard legal framework will be enough to kill the ecosystem in our trail system.

I know from our reading of this bill that this is not the intention—I hope. The intention is to allow for solid legal support to be put into place within the ecosystem where it could be beneficial for both landowners and trail users. This would only be reached through more individually negotiated agreements.

But that is not the perception out there, unfortunately. Whatever we can say about good intentions, there has been a failure of communication around this bill in a lot of places. There has been a failure to shape the discourse, and the conversation has been running wild in ways that have been very negative in parts of this province. Unfortunately, some of those wild rumours are coming out of here, out of the people who are representing the people.

That's unfortunate because the bottom line is that we are supposed to give pertinent, good and straightforward

information, and not feed into their frenzy—whether it's the landowners or whoever it is that's being negative about it—by standing up here and saying they're right when they're totally wrong, off-base, don't know or haven't read it. There's no threat to any landowner on his land—owning it or government taking it off him.

It's really irresponsible for individuals to stand up in this Legislature and create havoc over something that's not true. Whatever we can say about good intentions, there has been a failure of communication in more than one place. There has been a failure to shape the discourse and the conversation, and it has been running wild in ways that I can't believe. Withdrawing the bill won't fix that. There are amendments that could be made to improve this bill and clarify these issues. I would certainly support that.

What it's going to take is communication. Communication and consultation need to be expanded: outreach and a willingness—not too common with this government—to engage in a genuine dialogue with the people in rural and northern Ontario who are affected and worried by this bill. There needs to be a greater transparency in this bill and in the outreach. People need to have confidence that this bill will be of benefit to both landowners and trail users, that this legislation is a supplement to an enhancement of the existing trail system, not something new cooked up by the Liberals in their Toronto offices to destroy our trails. It's not true.

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It's not enough to engage with the lobbyists and stakeholders down here, either. Yes, the bill will affect urban trails, which are of enormous recreational benefit to the people of Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and other cities in our province. But the overwhelming impact of this bill will be in rural and northern Ontario, so let's not pretend otherwise. That's where it's really going to play a big role, so take the committee hearings and the consultations there. Farmers and snowmobilers—who are often the same people, I might add—aren't going to travel in great numbers here to Queen's Park from Timmins–James Bay or Kenora–Rainy River or Timiskaming–Cochrane. They won't be running down the 401 or on our 400-series highways on their snowmobiles—unless we can't move. They probably won't even travel in great numbers from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound or Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, because it's inconvenient and expensive for those people to come down here. They have to stay in a hotel; they have to stay for the hearings; they have to pay for gas. Take it to the people. Take it to the areas that are affected. Take it to the north and talk to the people who live there.

I'm a firm believer, from any military experience my family has had, that if you really want to know what's going on, you don't talk to the generals or the captains; you talk to the guy in the trench. You go to the front lines. You talk to the people who do it every day, not the big guys who make decisions in glass rooms somewhere in downtown Toronto. It doesn't work.

This is a huge province, Speaker, bigger than 85% of the countries on Earth. Travel here is expensive and time-consuming. It is completely out of touch and insulting to rural northern Ontarians to say that they need to take time out of their lives and spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars to come all the way to Toronto in order to make their voices heard. And most times, when they come to make their voices heard, they don't get the result they want, and then they go home even madder. That just perpetuates the poisonous idea that only Toronto matters in this province.

People are coming to the conclusion that there are two provinces: the province of Toronto, and the rest of us. I'll tell you, there's a movement in the north. It's almost like the old days of Quebec. They're getting to a point where they want to separate. That's how bad it is. The people feel that way under this government. It has to change. I'm not saying it's absolutely true in every circumstance, but we have a real problem with people feeling that way. It's not to anyone's benefit on either side to divide this province. This is one Ontario, and we need to make sure that all Ontarians' voices are heard equally and that they all feel like a part of the process and the decision-making. Ontario is Ontario.

So if we have a bill sitting here that primarily affects rural and northern Ontario, then that's where the hearings need to be. Unfortunately, to our great disappointment, the comments of many members of the governing party suggest that they feel otherwise and that they've done a marvellous job with their consultation.

Speaker, I just have to insert something here. With all due respect to the government or other people in this building, people make decisions here—it would be like somebody over there who was a teacher telling me, after 30 years of experience, what goes on at a steel plant when they've never walked through the door; or like a bureaucrat in downtown Toronto telling me about Hamilton when they've never crossed the Skyway Bridge. You've got to walk in their shoes. You've got to feel for the community. You've got to know. How do we do that? You listen to the members from those areas who talk to their people. You listen to their ideas in committee. You don't brush them aside and say, "We know best because we're in downtown Toronto." Sorry; that doesn't work. You're going to tell somebody who has never left downtown Toronto about the bear hunt—they probably haven't seen a bear other than at the zoo. So I'm really, really shocked at some of the decisions that are made without input from the people who come from those areas.

I wouldn't dare to tell the member from Kenora–Rainy River—because I've never been there; I'd like to go there; I should—what's going on in Kenora, and she probably wouldn't tell me what's going on in Hamilton. She probably hasn't gone through a steel mill in her life. I probably haven't fished on Lake Superior. I probably haven't fished, period.

When we start listening, in this Legislative Building, to the people who know their areas and know the people, this Legislature will work a lot better. And that's what committee is supposed to be about: amendments to make changes. In my years here, Speaker, I sat many times on

committee. Half of them walk out when you're talking; they're playing on their BlackBerry; reading newspapers. They don't care. You want to get up and bang your head on the wall, walk out, phone the people—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: They don't like that because it's true.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: They're obviously listening.

Mr. Paul Miller: I was in committees long before you were, and I know how it operates. So the bottom line is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Speak through the Chair.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm willing to help my colleagues, but if they're not going to be helped, it's pretty hard.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Speak through the Chair. Okay? There's no cross-talk, please. Let's be respectful. Let's speak through the Chair. There's no cross-talk.

Member, continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm willing to help the colleagues—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Let's make sure that we are respectful. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, speak through the Chair. And I respectfully ask the government side—I know that there are some inflammatory words that have been used. We're going to deal with them. I'm going to start giving people one warning, and after that you'll be named. That's how it's going to be.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: As I said, Speaker, we're willing to help our colleagues and are speaking very forcefully about the facts and the myths in this bill. But it's the government's job to promote their legislation, to ensure that the public has a proper understanding of it and to make sure that the bill doesn't have a negative impact on the trail system in Ontario, because if it does, if it continues to result in the closure of trails, then it will have been nothing more than another failure.

Hamilton is blessed with a beautiful waterfront trail, with the Red Hill Valley Recreational Trail, the Royal Botanical Gardens and, of course, the Bruce Trail that runs along the escarpment. We're lucky to be on the escarpment and to have access to the natural beauty of the Niagara Peninsula. We also have over 100 waterfalls. How many cities anywhere in the world can boast that—100 waterfalls? A great number of these are accessible by the trails.

We have the Battlefield Creek trail, which is rich with history. It connects to both the Bruce Trail and to Battlefield Park in my hometown of Stoney Creek. This is a major historic site, as it was the location of one of the most important battles in the War of 1812. The British victory there was crucial in preventing US troops from seizing Upper Canada. Many of the members are probably aware that I'm a bit of a history buff myself. I participate in the re-enactments every summer. So I really do appreciate the trail, not just for its natural beauty but for its connection to our country's history.

I would suggest that some of these members might want to come down to Stoney Creek and see the re-enactment. It's wonderful. There are 700 re-enactors. I'll be happy to show them how to fire a cannon.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll be happy to show them how to fire a cannon, especially the member from Waterdown. I'd like to have him over there.

We have the Bayfront Park Trail. We have the Breezeway Trail running through part of my riding from Beach Boulevard to Grays Road. The Chedoke radial trail is a pedestrian and bicycle pathway on the former right-of-way of the Brantford and Hamilton Electric Railway. It's actually part of the Bruce Trail and it links with a Hamilton Conservation Authority trail that crosses the Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area.

We have a new thing that's going to happen in Hamilton: A boulevard is going to be named after Tesla, the famous inventor who ran some of the first electrical lines in North American, along Burlington Street.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thought you were going to say it was named after you.

Mr. Paul Miller: No.

There's an Escarpment Rail Trail, a real gem. It's an accessible multi-use trail developed on an abandoned CN line that extends from above the escarpment near Albion Falls and heads west to the lower city. It has some wonderful views of the lower city, of the escarpment and the former Hamilton Brick Works. We have Spencer Creek Trail and the beautiful Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area trails. Speaker, there are many, many more.

Most people in Hamilton are aware of these trails, but the truth is that very few people have an idea of quite how many we have. I very much appreciate that there is a trails strategy in this bill, that as well as expanding the distance and the number of trails themselves, there will be a real effort to increase awareness of the trails and make it easier for people to access them.

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If we protect and expand our system of trails, we can open up even more of our spectacular landscapes and scenery to the public. This is a real public good we're talking about. At the same time, we will improve our offering for tourists from both home and abroad. We have some of the world's outstanding natural beauty here in our province. We should do everything in our power to facilitate public access to and enjoyment of it.

The key word here is "facilitate," Speaker; we cannot impose. Access to these trails is based on respect, trust and understanding with the landowners whose land these trails criss-cross.

The crux of the question is how to provide and facilitate access to privately owned land. How do we promote that and facilitate that in a respectful and mutually beneficial way, where all parties are protected, where liability issues and ownership rights are clarified, and where we don't create an undue need for the services of lawyers.

Here's an old Viking quote—that's going back:

"Kalf: We heard you took yourself away into the wilderness. Why?

"Bjorn: I went to find someone.

"Kalf: Who?

"Bjorn: Myself."

Now, the minister is already quoted as saying this: "An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so."

It is important that the government communicates this repeatedly, and that members on this side of the House do likewise in response to their constituents. But it seems to me that the concerns expressed by the landowners across this province cannot be eased entirely by spoken words alone. With all that has happened, the only way to reassure landowners of the truth of this statement is to insert clear language to the effect of this statement directly into this bill. We need an amendment that does this.

Colleagues' contributions to the debate: One of the benefits of having deferred my lead on this bill was the opportunity to listen to many more contributions than usual to this debate in the House.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane brought his wealth of knowledge and experience to this debate on Monday. I think it's very important that the government listen deeply to his comments as a farmer, a landowner and a snowmobiler from northern Ontario. It is doubly important because there isn't an abundance of that experience in this government caucus. Proportionately more of the opposition members represent ridings seriously affected by this bill, and that needs to be recognized.

Now, snowmobiling is both a practical means of transport in northern Ontario and a valuable tourist attraction. Northern Ontario is probably the best place in the world to snowmobile. But that isn't just due to the blessings of nature, Speaker. As my colleague has said, it's because of the very hard work of the snowmobiling clubs across the province that groom these trails and negotiate access to the trails with landowners.

Sometimes I wonder if the governing party misunderstands the land ownership situation in northern Ontario and assumes that there isn't really a problem because so much of the land is the property of the crown. Yes, it's true that a lot of the land is crown land, but certainly not all of it. In well-inhabited areas, where most of the well-used trails are, much of the land is private. What that means, Speaker, is that very many of the trails in northern Ontario are on private land. The trail-use clubs, mainly the snowmobile clubs, negotiate access with the private landowners and obtain their permission to use their private land.

As my colleague said, this opens up parts of the province that would never otherwise be seen. No roads go through many of these areas. Like some of the remote railroads in this country, such as the ones crossing the Rockies, these trails offer people an opportunity to see a part of the world that is otherwise inaccessible to the public.

The private landowners don't derive any profit from this, Speaker. They do it as good community citizens. They want to give back to their community and to their neighbours. Many are snowmobilers themselves. Of course, everyone gains when the landowners in a community participate in that sport. It's the very opposite of the tragedy of the commons.

Communities, especially tight-knit ones like those in rural Ontario, don't operate purely based on laws. They operate by norms, by custom, by recognition, by trust and by goodwill. It can be very dangerous to a community if you try, without good reason, to impose laws to replace some of those informal mechanisms. Now, I don't believe that this bill is attempting to impose legal arrangements such as easements on rural communities, but we have seen that even the perception that this is the case has upset the fine balance that keeps a community healthy and public-spirited.

There are many good reasons why a landowner and a private trail-user organization might want to agree upon an easement as the best protective arrangement for both parties, and this bill facilitates that. But there will equally be a great number of situations where this is not the case, where the arrangements based on trust and mutual respect are enough and should be allowed to continue. This bill will allow them to continue.

But people around this province are now worried that this is not the case. They're worried that their agreements of goodwill will be converted into legal claims of one party upon the other. When that happens, when the seed of fear is planted, the trust that sustains these agreements breaks down. Again, no involuntary easements will be created as a result of this bill. I repeat: No landowners are under threat.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane gave a great example of where an easement might be of great benefit to both a private landowner and an association of trail users. He got the example from the president of the Tri-Town Sno Travellers, so I'd like to recognize him as well.

If there's a farm or a piece of land that you're going to go across and the snowmobile club needs to put a bridge there—and the bridge is a quarter million dollars right now—there's no guarantee, other than a handshake with the landowner, that they can access the bridge after it's up. If the snowmobile club could have an easement to get to that bridge, they'd have more confidence in their investment of time and money, which would improve the trails all over our province. The bridge would be more likely to go ahead, and both the club and the landowner could gain from it. The landowner could maybe drive his tractor across it to get to other parts of his property. There are mutual agreements that could work for both sides that should be looked into deeply.

As he said, words like "easement" and "covenant" are trigger words for lawyers. The fact that this is optional is somewhat lost through that trigger, so we need a lot more clarity in the language and a lot better communication and outreach so that people can see for themselves and be reassured that existing arrangements are not affected. The

cloud of lawyers and the possibility of losing power over your land are blown away. As for the options around easements, those need to be written and communicated very clearly as well so that everyone is clear about their rights.

Now we'll talk about assignment of easements. Something that many of the members and their constituents found problematic is the ability of an eligible body to assign an easement to another eligible body. There simply aren't enough conditions on this, Speaker. This is the kind of provision that will have landowners dead set against this legislation. If a provision of this kind has to be included, then it should be conditional on the consent of the property owner. If no consent can be obtained, then perhaps in this instance there should be a provision for the parties to agree on termination of the easement.

Let me read this problematic subsection aloud. Schedule 1, subsection 12(8): "An easement may be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body, but the assignment must be in writing and must be registered on title to the land."

If and when the committee hearings and consultations are taken on the road and around this province, which is what needs to happen, then I expect you will hear a lot of opposition to this, and it is important to hear the opposition. We need to listen to the people it will affect and listen to the people's ideas to fix the problem and make this subsection more acceptable to both sides.

Alienation of rural and northern Ontario—and you would hope that if not out of respect for the people of rural and northern Ontario, and if not out of genuine desire for good public policy, the government might be persuaded to engage more deeply with these communities out of pure political self-interest because nothing's going to alienate them further from this government faster than the perception that they're ramming through a bill for rural Ontario designed in Toronto and that the only consultations they'll hold or that matter to them are with other people who live in Toronto; that they won't have the decency or respect to go and have open, two-way conversations with the people and communities most directly affected by this legislation.

That infuriates people, Speaker. It alienates them, and it causes great resentment. And that mood is growing in this province. Every so often, we receive letters calling for northern secession. That would be awful. But it's not just geographic. This government is going out of its way to alienate so many demographics and segments of the population across the province, and that includes people here in Toronto, believe it or not.

There is a perception that when the government wants to make a policy, it talks to people in Toronto, it holds some sort of consultations here in Toronto and makes the decisions here in Toronto. There's a lot of truth to that, Speaker, but I think we're looking at this through the wrong lens. It's not about Toronto as a place. The government is not talking to the 99% of regular people in Toronto. It's talking to a very small group of influential people in Toronto with a particularly high concentration on Bay Street. It's an old, tired government that is speaking to an echo bubble that is growing even smaller in diameter, and getting closer to the inner circle, a circle of powerful, influential and wealthy people.

The ordinary person in Ontario doesn't have a say in this government's policy, whether they live in Windsor, Timmins, Hamilton or Toronto. It's the big corporations' interests and the top 1% that are driving many of these decisions. It's a sad state of affairs, Speaker.

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Like I have said, this is a well-intentioned bill that we can support at second reading, provided that the government is willing to accept constructive amendments, and provided that the government is willing to take consultations on the road to communities impacted by this legislation. But the culture and—I hate to use the word—sleaze surrounding the government have created a deep distrust among the people of Ontario, and rightly so. Now they're hearing about a bill that might take away their rights over their land. They're willing to believe it, or at least consider the possibility, because the government's track record doesn't give them any confidence in its good faith or good intentions.

Remember that the farmers and the landowners don't gain personally from allowing access to their trails, so when they hear bad stories about the bill, they rightly get nervous, because they have a lot to lose if it's true—a lot more than they have to gain if it's false. It's going to require very honest, good-faith outreach from this government to reassure private landowners that they have nothing to fear about this bill. I know it can be done because last year, when this bill was introduced, I had a very constructive, open round-table meeting with the minister's staff about the bill. From that meeting and from the comments by the minister, I do believe that it's a well-intentioned bill. But it's going to take a lot of engagement and communication to reassure people around this province and dispel the doubts that groups like the Ontario Landowners Association have stirred up.

Speaker, I see I have only a few seconds. This bill has a lot of potential, but as I said before, the people in this Legislature, especially the governing body, have to start listening to the people who represent northern Ontario. I wouldn't dare to go into Kenora–Rainy River and tell their town council, their farmers or their hunters and fishing people what to do. It would be totally off base. Hopefully, when this goes to committee, the government listens to the people who represent northern Ontario. Then—just then—it might work.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I don't often get a chance to follow my colleague from Hamilton in the assembly, but I'm pleased to do so today. As part of that, I want to take a minute to introduce Antoin Diamond, who is here from the Bruce Trail Association. Thank you for coming today.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked a bit about alienation from government. I understand that. I get alienated from government when I think of the Red

Hill Valley and putting a freeway down the middle of it. I get alienated from governments at different levels when I see 85% of our wetlands paved over—these precious resources we have that we need to be protecting and seeing as a treasure.

I appreciated the honourable member's remarks very much, particularly his reference to the Bruce Trail. When I leave my house, I'm about from here to the honourable member's seat away from actually walking onto the Bruce Trail, and it's something that my wife and I enjoy very much. It's one of the longest and oldest hiking trails in Canada, and it provides a continuous opportunity all the way from the Bruce down. It's wonderful.

I really appreciated the member's comments about respect, trust and a shared sense of interest. I think we share that in common. I just want to say to the honourable member that I'd love to join you on a trail somewhere in Hamilton.

I'll end with this, honourable member:

Happy trails to you, until we meet again.
Happy trails to you, keep smiling until then.

Mr. Paul Miller: Roy Rogers.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You're right: Roy Rogers. I was eight years old. I watched it every Saturday morning. It got me hooked on trails.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me begin by congratulating the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the other Miller, on an excellent one-hour presentation on Bill 100. I think he did a good job of raising concerns.

I especially liked his points about consultation. I think a lot of the problems with the misconceptions with this bill have come about because the government didn't do a very good job of consulting. They say they consulted with 250 groups. Well, they missed the Ontario Landowners Association. That's kind of a key group that they missed. A lot of the trails are open because of our landowners that generously—they don't get benefit from it, really; they just do it out of the goodness of their hearts, allowing snowmobile trails etc. on their land.

I absolutely agree that we need clear language that makes it very clear that easements are voluntary. In fact, I have a letter from Bob Clarke, the president of the Snowcrest Riders in Gravenhurst, saying that they are having trail closures as of April 1, some that affect major bridges that cost millions of dollars to build.

He says, in his letter here, "Mr. Miller, the landowners I have talked to want section 12 of proposed Bill 100 to be amended to include the simple wording below that Minister Michael Coteau has already stated:

"'An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so.'"

He says, "Add the above statement from the minister to section 12 of Bill 100, and we may address the concerns of the landowner."

I completely support what the member is suggesting. I also completely support the idea that this has got to be—if ever there was a bill that needs to be taken around the province by committee, this one needs to go around northern and rural Ontario so that those groups that have concerns about it can have a say and deal with that. I sure hope the government does that in this case.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new role.

I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for a good bit of debate there for an hour. He raises a few good points. The consultation and the engagement piece is very important. The piece about amendments that are already coming forward as we're having this debate to make sure that the legislation reflects some of those practical, I think, solutions should be forthcoming.

The problem has been, though, the last couple of times I've been in committee, none of these practical amendments that groups, agencies and stakeholders are putting forward are actually getting approved at a committee level under a majority Liberal government. Just this week in the budget committee, some amendments were put forward to address communication of budgets and policies that would have fallen under the AODA and would have improved communications for people with disabilities—those who are blind and deaf—and the government members voted those amendments down.

A couple of weeks ago, a number of amendments were put forward on the PTSD bill, and once again the government members voted those amendments down. It's fine for stakeholders to come forward, and it's good. I think we need to travel the bill and make sure that we are reaching out to those people in rural and northern areas that are going to be affected. But if they're going to put forward solutions that will make this bill palatable for them, we need to be assured that, when those amendments actually come to committee, the government members are not going to just shake their heads and vote those amendments down, as they did with the PTSD bill and as they did with the AODA amendments in the budget deliberations earlier this week.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Madam Chair—sorry, Deputy Speaker—and congratulations on your ascension to this role.

I would like to add comment to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his excellent presentation. He's very passionate, obviously, about this issue. I appreciated very much the passion he brought to it, but I would like to lay to rest this notion that this has not been widely consulted on.

Starting in 2005, there was a whole series of consultations, with nine full-day sessions and 14 regional consul-

tations. In 2013, 80 municipalities were contacted and 48 trail organizations, including the Moonbeam Nature Trails, Kawartha Trans Canada Trail Association, Forest Lea Trails Association, Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance, the Peterborough-Hastings Trans Canada Trail Association, Simcoe County Trails, Voyageur Trail Association, Rainbow Routes Association, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Kawartha Lakes Green Trails Alliance, the Dufferin-Grey ATV Club Inc., and it goes on and on and on.

In addition, other non-profit organizations were widely consulted on this bill in 2013 so that we did get the bill mostly right. If there are to be amendments, let's make sure they're good amendments and not some of the spurious kinds of puffery amendments we often see from the other side.

Speaker, we also had nine not-for-profit organizations, including the O'Hara Volunteers Association, the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, the Ottawa River Institute, Ottawa Riverkeepr—and so many more: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Toronto to Algonquin Greenway. We had aboriginal consultations taking place. Let's be clear, this has been widely consulted upon.

I think there might be a great opportunity to hear more in terms of the bill and what the current bill looks like. I look forward to hearing from all across the province of Ontario on ways that, if it can be improved, we certainly would like improve it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to wrap up this round of debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ted and I—Minister McMeekin and I—share a love for Hamilton, its trails and its Royal Botanical Gardens. It's a hidden treasure that most people in Ontario don't realize. We have the most waterfalls of any city in, probably, I would say, North America. And so I recommend that you come and visit us. Believe it or not, in spite of the grumpiness, we can be hospitable.

I'd also like to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his insight. There's the perfect guy to talk to. He probably rides snowmobiles. He's from rural Ontario. He understands his people. He's been here a long time. It's because his name's the same, but I certainly respect Norm's knowledge of his surroundings and the people he represents. Certainly he would be beneficial to any discussions.

Of course, my good friend from Welland is well aware, being close to Niagara Falls, that there are a few trails down there, too, and in Welland. Being a former mayor, she's well aware of what people face, whether they be landowners or recreational groups.

Now, my friend from Beaches–East York: Well, I have to say to him that he did rhyme off a lot of people. I'm not sure where the consultations took place, whether it was mostly here or in the particular areas he meant. You can have consultations, Speaker, but if you don't listen to the people in the consultations—if you would have talked to all those people, who in the world would have put section 12 into that bill? That is the worst thing you could have done. If you were listening to all these people, you would have heard that, I'm sure, because the landowners have made it quite clear. So I'm not quite sure who was listening at those consultations or how many people actually attended them and came back.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I recess the House, I just want to remind the members that you are not to use first names. Remember that? The rules? You are to use the riding and not the first name. You know the rules.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thanks so much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it's almost 10:15, we're going to recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Would members please join me in welcoming three prominent members of the GTA's Turkish community? Sitting in the members' gallery to my right are Mr. Erdeniz Şen, the consul general of the Republic of Turkey in Toronto; Ms. Rüçhan Akkök, the director of the Turkish Society of Canada and a resident of my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville; and Mr. Cenk Sayın, the vice-president of the Turkish Society of Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On behalf of Minister Chan, the MPP for Markham–Unionville, I'd like to introduce the page captain for the day, Samantha Su, and her mother, Elaine Cheung. She will be in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In the members' gallery here today we have Caleb Ellis and his wife, Kelly Semkiw. They are here with their Jersey of Courage, making Ontario workplaces more safe.

After question period, Speaker, we'll have a jersey out here for all the MPPs to sign to show support for safer workplaces in Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome the recipients of the Leading Women Building Communities award from my riding: Adeena Niazi, who is the executive director of the Afghan Women's Organization; Dr. Barbara Landau, who is the CEO of Cooperative Solutions; Ricky Goldenberg, the principal at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute; and Dr. Nasreen Khatri, a psychiatrist at Baycrest.

I also would like to introduce Afie Mardukhi, who works in my constituency office and makes all these things happen. Thank you, all of you, for what you do, and welcome.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce two guests who are here to spend a day with their MPP: Mr. Bill Doyle and Mr. John Ricci.

Mr. Han Dong: On behalf of the honourable member from Willowdale and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,

I would like to introduce the mother of page captain Barton Lu, Jing Shu Natasha Wang; and father, Ping Lu. They'll be here in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Lucille Kyle, vice-chair of the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, along with my staffer Travis Hoover, EA to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce and welcome, here in the members' gallery, my husband, Germinio Pio Politi, who is here visiting this morning.

Ms. Cindy Forster: In the members' gallery, I'd like to introduce Nick Bodo, chair of youth service for the Rotary Club of Welland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to introduce my good friend Scott Sutherland, who is joined here by Alfred Josef Baldacchino, the Prince Grand Master of the Byzantine Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and his colleagues from all over Europe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to introduce Troy Russell. He's a constituent and the father of page Vanessa Russell, who I personally think is doing a fantastic job. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I wish to acknowledge Jennifer Crowson and her son Owen Crowson; Irene Turpie; and Ingrid Muschta and her son, Alexander. I'm not sure if they're in the audience yet, but they're on their way here to support Down syndrome today.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, ça me fait plaisir d'accueillir aujourd'hui, dans la galerie de l'ouest, Jean-François Morin, qui est un professeur à La Cité collégiale dans ma circonscription. Bienvenue, Jean-François.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Multiple police investigations, corruption charges in Sudbury, allegations of government contracts being awarded in exchange for hefty donations to the governing party—the people of Ontario work hard to pay their taxes, and they don't deserve a government mired in scandal. They deserve to know that their tax dollars were not given away in exchange for donations to the Liberal Party.

Will the Premier give the people of Ontario the truth they deserve? Will she call for a commission of inquiry to investigate the fundraising practices of the Ontario Liberal Party?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just remind this House, and remind the people of Ontario, in the wake of this question, that this whole discussion about the changes to fundraising rules was in this context, first of all, that all parties—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Both sides are not doing me a favour, nor anyone else that needs to hear. This will be my last generic comment. I'll move to individuals, one at a time, and I'll get there.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that all parties—I can only assume, with integrity—have been operating within a set of rules. I had made an indication that we were going to move to change those rules. We had already made some changes in terms of real-time disclosure and putting limits in place. We are making those changes. We are moving ahead with those changes. We will bring legislation in the spring.

But I think it's important to remember that the context of this discussion was a need to change the rules for everyone, rules that we were all operating in with integrity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Just because this government brought in new rules for Ornge Air, it didn't stop the OPP from investigating a shady business deal.

Just because the government brought in new rules for saving emails, that didn't stop the OPP from charging senior Liberal staffers David Livingston and Laura Miller for wiping away evidence of a scandal.

Nothing this Premier can promise about reform is going to change the fact that how this government has given out contracts and grants has to be subject to a full investigation.

I will repeat my question, because for two days I have not gotten an answer. To the Premier: Will she do the right thing? Will she call a commission of inquiry, or is she going to wait for another police investigation into her government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to go through, once again, what it is we are doing. I've talked about the context in which this conversation has begun and is taking place.

As I said, we have already taken a number of initiatives. In 2007, we were the party that introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time. We introduced real-time disclosure for political donations. As I announced last June, we're committed to making further changes.

As I have said, our government plans to introduce legislation on political donations this spring, including transitioning away from union and corporate donations. That's why I made the decision, that I talked about in this House, to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers, which I have done. Ministers can continue to do small-group, high-value fundraisers, but those events have to be publicly disclosed before they happen—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and the second stipulation is that ministers will not be fundraising with stakeholders in those meetings from their own ministries.

It's important that we get this right. I look forward to the meeting on Monday with the leaders of the opposition parties.

1040

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Once again to the Premier: There's an expression, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." And boy, there is a lot of smoke right now.

All the Premier's talk of reform is really an admission on her part that there is rot in this government. The people deserve to know if this government is rotten to the core. They deserve to know if the companies felt obligated to donate in order to receive grants and contracts. They deserve to know if companies were made to feel that they had to donate in order to get a government meeting or a contract.

Why won't the Premier give the people of Ontario the truth? I will repeat again: Will the Premier call a commission of inquiry?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let's be clear. The Leader of the Opposition is talking a big game, with lots of bluster about this issue, but the truth is that there's only one leader who is taking real action and that is the Premier.

So I ask you again: If you really believe what you are saying, why aren't you cancelling your secret private fundraiser? I just do not—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville: second time, and direct your comments to the Chair. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like the Leader of the Opposition to explain why he's not cancelling his $5,000-a-person fundraiser at Barberian's Steak House. It puts a new meaning to "stakeholder": the "steak holders" at Barberian's Steak House.

Why wouldn't he prove that this is not just political gamesmanship and that he sincerely believes we should put an end to that kind of fundraising?

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. If the thought of calling a public inquiry is just too scary for this Premier to consider, then let me try a smaller step. This Premier said she would be open and transparent. She made mandate letters to her ministers public—well, almost public; she didn't include the part about fundraising quotas.

Will the Premier—and this is a very important question—release a list of every company that received a grant or contract from her government, and a list of every company and association that successfully lobbied her government for a policy change? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way that contracts are awarded and the way that grants are awarded—there are very strict rules around those. There are procurement processes. They are not political processes any more than, I assume, the development of policy on the part of the opposition parties to do with their fundraising.

The fact is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have an understanding of the seriousness of the issue. It's not helpful when it gets to the point where I literally cannot hear the response, nor is it helpful when the members of the same bench are shouting out. It does not help me in dealing with the opposition, and the same goes for the government on that side. So I'm going to ask everyone to tone it down. Thank you very much.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's very important that people know who gives money to government parties and who gives money to opposition parties. I think the real-time disclosure of those things is very important. That's why we moved to put those rules in place and now we're going to go farther and change the rules further.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I recognize you, it's not helpful that I speak to somebody and seconds later they start up again.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: My question was about the contract the government is giving out. If this government really had nothing to hide, the answer to that question would have been a no-brainer. The people of Ontario deserve to know these lists. They must be made public so they can compare the lists with the lists of those donating to the Liberal Party. Based on what the media has been reporting, the public might find those two lists are pretty similar.

I ask the Premier this: Will she direct the Ontario Liberal Fund to return every donation received from the companies that got grants and contracts or that successfully lobbied for a policy change? Will the Premier pay the money back, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. As the member was finishing the question, I was going to stand to admonish, for the second time, the deputy House leader.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Leader of the Opposition is behaving like he is as pure as the driven snow, but let's look at some questions. For his leadership campaign, he received donations from estate planning com-

panies. Then he brings forward his very first private member's bill, which benefits only them and their clients. The OMA sponsors the party convention and the next thing you know, they're standing up, demanding that doctors be paid more. We know that the Leader of the Opposition is being—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have been hearing a couple things in there that I'm not impressed with and I sure know that the members know they shouldn't be saying it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We know the Leader of the Opposition is being investigated by the Integrity Commissioner because he tried to sell off access to the west lobby.

So my question to the Leader of the Opposition is, how much do you have to donate to get a private member's bill? How much do you have to donate to get a question asked in question period?

Interjections.

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

As I have said in the past to other people asking questions that are borderline impugning motives, I'm going to tell the member that she has not helped herself and it will not happen again.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I've been asking serious questions about making the contracts the government gives out public and about paying the money back. Instead, I hear smears and attacks. I'm hoping that this time I can actually get an answer. If the government really wanted to show the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, second time.

It sounds to me that there's going to be a discussion amongst all of you as to how fast you want me to get to warnings, so I'm going to get to warnings. From here on in, individuals I hear—not that there's a lot of you—will get a warning.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: If the government really wanted to show the public that money didn't buy a meeting with a cabinet minister, they would give the money back. If this government really wanted to prove to the people of Ontario that decisions they made had absolutely nothing to do with the millions and millions of dollars in donations to the Liberal Party, they would give the money back. But the Premier won't do that and that is why we need a public inquiry to shine a light on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is warned. Who's next?

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government doesn't want me to finish this question.

The reason we need a public inquiry to shine a light on the rot is just to find out how deep it goes. The Premier knows full well where the latest scandal is heading. Why doesn't the Premier cut her losses, do the right thing and call the public inquiry?

Interjections.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: And don't dodge the question. Don't dodge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would suggest not getting yourself in trouble when I'm standing.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Finance is warned.

Deputy Premier.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's time for the Leader of the Opposition to show some leadership on this. They are still stuck in the old ways. Exhibit A: the Toronto Leader's Dinner is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Toronto Leader's Dinner is coming up. I'm sure the caucus will all be there. Potential—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is warned and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned. And you can turn sideways all you want.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Potential donors are being encouraged to pay $25,000 for a so-called victory table, $10,000 more than the normal table. But it's worth the money: The extra $10,000 gives you the opportunity to host a caucus member. When it comes to the PCs, though, the more you pay, the more you get. By donating $30,000 or more, attendees will score an invite to a private reception—

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

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier tasked the Ministers of Energy and Finance to sell off Hydro One. They then hired a group of bankers to manage that sell-off, and those bankers made a lot of money doing that. Then those same ministers called up those same bankers and said, "Come to our fundraiser and give us money."

Just yesterday, that pattern repeated itself. Those same bankers are going to make millions more selling off the next batch of Hydro One shares. Is the Premier really okay with this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to talk about the process.

I'm very aware of the young people in the Legislature right now, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am. Well, you can heckle all you want. I just want to say, and I want to say it about every member in this House: Every member in this House came into politics because they believe that there's more they can do to help the people of Ontario.

The fundraising rules that have been in place in this province have been followed by all parties. We believe that they need to be changed. I am going to work and meet with the leaders of the opposition on Monday and I am going to get their input on how they think those changes should happen. But I just want to be clear that it is my belief that this discussion is in the context of every party in this Legislature following a set of rules and following the same set of rules. I have made the assumption about the opposition parties. I hope they've made the assumption about us that we have all done that with integrity—

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

Interjections.

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

I want to take a moment, please. I've noticed a couple of people in the House have devices that are open during question period. I remind you of the rules regarding the use of devices. They are not to be used in any way, shape or form during question period with regard to photos, taping or that kind of stuff. I just give you that warning now because if it appears on Twitter or if it appears anywhere else, I'll be dealing with it very severely.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Energy said that everything was fine with how the government picked the banks to sell off Hydro One. He said so because that process had been overseen by the former Auditor General, Denis Desautels.

Did the Minister of Energy at any time inform the auditor that once the sale had started, ministers would be going back to the banks involved in the sale and asking them to contribute $7,500 a plate in a $165,000 fundraiser?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said yesterday, I'll state again today: The former Auditor General of Canada looked at the whole selection process and he signed off on it as being objective and fair.

But really, what's getting under their skin is the success of the Hydro One IPO and the secondary offer. We're meeting our targets to get $5 billion to pay down debt. We've already paid down enough to save $100 million a year in interest payments. So it's paying huge dividends. We're already ahead of our plan to invest the proceeds into the Trillium Foundation to build infrastructure. And she's probably really disturbed by the fact that the price of the shares of Hydro One since the IPO has gone up by over 15%.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Minister of Energy didn't answer my question—which was whether or not the Auditor General was made aware of the things that were coming afterwards, which was the request for these bankers to raise money for the Liberal Party. That was the question. I'm sure the auditor didn't actually have that information.

After this small group of bankers attended a $165,000 fundraising dinner, the Ministers of Finance and Energy gave them another slice of the Hydro One pie for dessert. How much will these bankers be earning for selling off the next batch of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm sure that the leader of the third party has heard a lot about what happened to the original IPO and the secondary offer.

The reality is that the fees that these bankers—and there were 16 of them who were in the syndicate. There was not one or two or three; there were 16, as is normal in the process. The amount they paid in fees was almost unprecedented in terms of what they saved the province for a transaction of this size. We should be proud of what they were able to deliver in terms of low fees.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. No, actually, keep the clock going.

It's difficult when both sides are having conversations back and forth while the question is being put or the answer is being put. This announcement is for anyone, from any party: The warnings will come even if you're trying to have a conversation across, if it's disturbing.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'll just read from the Globe and Mail, after the IPO. The Globe and Mail noted that our government had "persuaded Bay Street to accept some of the lowest IPO underwriting fees imaginable." The same thing happened in the secondary offer yesterday.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This isn't just about cabinet ministers' suspect fundraising activity; it's about the people across Ontario.

After facing a criminal investigation for the Ornge scandal, a criminal investigation for the gas plants scandal and a criminal investigation for the Sudbury bribery scandal, the same Premier has now created a fundraising scandal that's shaking people's faith in our democracy. But she says only the Liberal Party can solve the problem that they created.

Does she really think that's okay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me go back to where I started at the beginning of question period today, and that is to say that quite contrary to what the leader of the third party is saying, this whole discussion has come about because we were already on a track to change the rules. We were all operating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Barrie are warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We had already introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time; we had already introduced real-time disclosure. I said last June that we were going to be moving in the direction of changing donation rules. I said in June that we were going to move in that direction; that's exactly where we are moving.

We were all—all of us in this House, all the parties in Ontario—operating under the same set of rules. I think there's a fair degree of consensus that we all need to change the rules, and I look forward to the input from the leaders of the opposition parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, a democratic system means that everyone has an equal voice, but people see a system here in Ontario where wealthy donors with deep pockets get one level of access to the decision-makers and everyone else gets shut out.

I believe the facts say that ministers have broken the Members' Integrity Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, and I look forward to the Integrity Commissioner's investigation and report.

In the Sudbury bribery scandal, we have people on tape saying that they were following the Premier's instructions. Do we again have a situation where the Premier is responsible for giving direction that may well prove to be against the law or in violation of the act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's interesting. The third party is trying to leave the impression that all the money they raise comes from bake sales and rummage sales and garage sales and spaghetti suppers.

1100

Let's just look at some of the other fundraising that's happening. Recently there was a fundraiser at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts—I'm sure it was lovely—limited to 10 guests at $9,975 a person. That happened in December. That's not all; there have been other lovely events like a private stakeholder social at the Gardiner museum—I'm sure that was lovely too—limited to 10 guests only at $9,975 per person in April.

Let's just understand: One Premier—one leader in this Legislature—has taken real action—

Interjections.

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

As a follow-up to my concerns, I will also start looking at the members of the same bench with warnings if they're interjecting while the answer is being put.

New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I actually have a third part, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't think big money should be able to buy special influence over government decisions. That's the bottom line. I think that Ontarians actually agree—

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians agree and I think that they're concerned when they see a government selling access and then saying that they—and they alone, by using their majority—should be in charge of changing the rules. I don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm insistent that we're going to do things the way they're supposed to be done. The Minister of Education is warned.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think people trust a government facing three criminal investigations to be in charge of changing the rules about fundraising ethics all on their own. I don't think people trust the party that created this ministerial quota system and the sale of access to decision-makers to fix it. Does the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party knows that the Premier has invited herself and the Leader of the Opposition to have a meeting next week to talk about exactly this issue. Nonetheless, the party opposite is—it's time for them to walk the talk.

There is another event coming up, which means another opportunity for the leader to show some leadership: a fundraiser at Liuna Station coming up on April 13. Guests who are interested in joining the leaders' circle are asked to pay $9,975. But it must be worth the money because it includes access to the private reception taking place before the main event.

My question really is: Will the leader of the third party continue with this event—this exclusive access at the private reception—or will she show some leadership and cancel the event?

Interjections.

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

Again, I apologize to the leader of the third party for missing her final supplementary.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The minister is one of the largest fundraisers for the Liberals, by tapping into companies in his ministerial portfolio. He has one of the highest fundraising quotas in the cabinet. In his own words, he believes he's exceeding that quota. The minister to the Liberal Party is like a living, breathing ATM machine.

Does the minister believe that it is appropriate for a minister of the crown to raise large sums of money from stakeholders bidding on projects that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, where he has the power to give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down? Is that appropriate, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm not sure whether I've ever had a fundraiser that required $10,000, like the Leader of the Opposition. Like everybody else in this room—like the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition—I've hosted fundraisers and raised funds for the party, as all of us in this room have.

But I think the anger and the angst over there comes as much from the success of what we're doing on the job, and it's a great, great deflection.

I think that the critic for the Conservatives is very surprised that the wind prices came in at 8.5 cents a kilowatt hour, which is unprecedented. They never would have expected that wind would come in lower than the average price of generation in the system.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again to the minister: There's a reason why ministers' personal assets are managed by blind trusts while those of backbenchers and opposition members are not. It is because ministers hold a tremendous amount of power that backbenchers and opposition members don't. It is to protect the public from the influence of money in politics.

Combined, the seven successful bidders in his Large Renewable Procurement, round 1, gave the Liberal Party over a quarter of a million dollars. Those companies who gave no donations were unsuccessful. As the saying goes, something smells fishy in Denmark.

How can the public have any confidence that the same favouritism won't be the order of the day in Large Renewable Procurement, round 2?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Independent Electricity System Operator conducts all of the procurement for the renewables—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We find out who the successful bidders are after the IESO has notified the winners and after it has been made public.

We have a fairness adviser to act as a neutral, disinterested and independent adviser for the procurement process, and who published a report on March 10, 2016, following the announcement of the contracts. This report is available on the website, and this is what the fairness adviser said: "We are satisfied that the evaluation of the proposals was conducted strictly in accordance with the process set out in the LRP/RFP. We detected no bias or favouritism towards or against any particular proponent."

Mr. Speaker, that fairness commissioner, or the Auditor General, Denis Desautels, could have checked—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. A week ago today, the minister proudly announced she was reducing the wait-list for autism services by kicking kids off the wait-list.

More than 10,000 parents have signed an online petition, pleading with the minister to reverse her decision to take essential therapy away from kids ages five years and over. The minister is actually telling parents that her only option to deal with the wait-list is to start fresh. Really? The only way that this government can deal with the mess that it created is by forcing kids five and over to pay the price twice?

The minister should be embarrassed, Speaker. Parents and medical professionals are not buying it. Will the minister do the right thing and immediately grandfather all children who were on the wait-list at the time of her announcement? Yes or no?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank my critic for the question. I hope she takes advantage of our offer from last week to attend a briefing to get the facts—the facts of the $330-million investment in this program and the 16,000 new spaces.

I've heard her in the media about her suggestion to grandfather kids that are on the IBI wait-list, kids who are over five. I'm actually happy she agrees that the appropriate development window for intensive intervention, based on what the experts are telling us, is appropriate. She seems to agree with that.

But, Speaker, let's be clear: What she is suggesting actually prevents children under the age of five from receiving the services they need and, if we follow that plan, it will take four more years before children start accessing the intervention services they absolutely need. That is not good, Speaker. We have to have children in the right developmental window, based on what the experts say.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's all about this government's priorities, what is important to this government.

Children are our future. We've heard story after story from parents and families about the turmoil that they are experiencing. It's heartbreaking and, quite frankly, it's devastating. One parent asked the Liberals to imagine being told that your child is too old to benefit from the therapy that, just last week, would have given them the greatest hope of their life.

A sibling of a child with ASD begs, "Please do not take away my little brother's voice for his future." A

parent of a child who started therapy after the age of six and became verbal wants to know why this government is trying to silence other children's voices and futures. Parents wonder why this government doesn't think that their kids are worth that investment. Parents want to know why this minister is punishing vulnerable kids with autism.

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This government does care about children with ASD. This government is investing more and creating more spaces.

Again, it's important that the member of the third party actually gets the facts straight. We are giving $8,000 per family immediately to those children who are on the list.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If you want to listen, I'll tell you what it will do. It will take kids off—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Children who are transitioning from the IBI wait-list will receive $8,000 immediately for treatment. That means they're getting treatment now if they're coming off a wait-list. And—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'll identify the individual with a warning.

Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: When services from that $8,000 expire, they will continue to be in the enhanced behavioural therapy program. Most of those children will be at the top of the list, if they're not there already. That service will be enhanced by three times—

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

New question.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, in my riding of Halton we have two large correctional facilities that play an important role in our community: Maplehurst Correctional Complex and the Vanier Centre for Women. They house close to 1,800 inmates, and that's a considerable number of people and a huge responsibility.

I've met on several occasions with correctional services staff, and they often bring up the need for more officers in our institutions. We know that our correctional staff work hard every day to keep our communities safe. It is a difficult and important job, and we thank them for their tireless efforts. But we also know that to support the good work that they do every day, we need to continue hiring more correctional officers. In fact, correctional officers often explain that additional staff will help improve safety, expand programs, and build a positive correctional system.

Could the minister please explain what the government is doing to address this need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really do want to thank the member for Halton for her advocacy on behalf of our correctional workers in the province of Ontario.

It is absolutely clear to me and to everybody that I speak to that the correctional system must be transformed. We know that the status quo cannot continue. We also know that our correctional services staff, including our correctional officers, are the backbone of our correctional system. Government recognizes that hiring additional correctional officers must be the first step in this transformation. That is why we have already hired 710 new correctional officers since 2013.

We're not stopping there. Last month, I had the pleasure to join the members from Halton and Burlington, along with Alex Sawicki and Gord Longhi from OPSEU, at the Ontario Correctional Services College, where we announced that we'll be hiring an additional 2,000 new correctional officers over the next three years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I was also pleased to join you for that announcement, because to me it symbolized how our government is moving forward with the transformation of corrections in Ontario. It was also a powerful opportunity to witness public service in action, and to talk to corrections recruits about their desire to make a difference in the lives of those they hope to help on a daily basis. I know, too, that the addition of these new corrections officers will make an important difference in the safe and secure operations of institutions across our province and help to put "corrections" back in "correctional services."

That said, Mr. Speaker, as the minister works hard to add new corrections officers to the system, there are other challenges that need to be addressed. In addition to the need for more staff, we are hearing about the need to increase mental health supports for inmates and to develop more effective rehabilitation programs across Ontario.

Minister, we already know that building bigger jails in Ontario is not the only answer to addressing these challenges, nor is it the way to build safer communities in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you, will the minister please explain his plan to continue transforming corrections in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: That's a very good question. The member is absolutely right. We need to make sure that we transform the system, and the way we deal with the capacity issue is not by building more jails, but in fact by reducing the demand for jails. That's where the success will lie, and that's what is going to ensure that our communities are safe. It's important for exactly that reason that we invest in mental health training for our correc-

tional officers and services for inmates, so that we can provide them the appropriate care they need while they are in our care and custody.

That's why we have added 32 new mental health nurses across Ontario and worked with CAMH to develop additional mental health training for those who work in our institutions. A comprehensive review of our segregation policies is also under way. In addition, we are building a 122-bed regional intermittent centre at EMDC, which is going to help further.

Speaker, there is a lot more to do. These transformations will not happen overnight, but we are committed at our end to get the job done.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Earlier this week, the Toronto Sun reported on the dozens of private corporations that have both donated to the Ontario Liberal Party and received government grants. This includes corporations like Linamar, who donated $9,300 to the Ontario Liberals and afterwards received $1.5 million from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Many other corporations, like OpenText, have also made significant donations to the Ontario Liberal Party, only to receive significant government grants afterwards. Why does the Premier support and engage in this type of pay for play?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll accept that transfer—but again, we're getting darn close to the same kind of accusation of impugning motive. So I would ask you to be cautious and find other ways to say what you want to say. I'm trying to be as free as possible, but I need to have control of that as part of the parliamentary process here.

Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me just say, Mr. Speaker—and I can say this without any doubt, unequivocally—that our business support programs are completely depoliticized in their decision-making process. Absolutely, completely, without one shred of doubt I can say that.

What I can say as well is, the majority of our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're adding yourselves to my list. The member for Beaches–East York is warned, the leader of the third party is warned and the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The question for Ontarians that they deserve to know is, does the Leader of the Opposition support those investments we've made that have brought $29 billion of private sector investment to Ontario, created or retained 160,000 jobs? We know where the critic stands. Where does his leader stand, Mr. Speaker? Or is he going to flip-flop on this issue like he does on all the others?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Despite the fact that in less than 10 years Ontario's debt has grown by 91%, this government continues to send taxpayers' dollars to private, for-profit corporations. In fact, this government has implemented a rigid fundraising scheme where it appears that Ontario Liberal donors are receiving preferential treatment and inappropriate government access.

1120

In order to clear the air, I requested a list of all corporate grants from the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure back in January, but this morning I'd like to make a wider request. Will the Premier disclose all government grant and contract recipients and immediately refund all donations for any organization that received grants, subsidies or contracts for which they lobbied the Liberal government?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our government has invested $2.8 billion, which we're very proud of, in support for business investments. That has attracted $29 billion in business investment and helped to retain or create 160,000 jobs.

The question I think Ontarians deserve to know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not stopping.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned and the member from Nipissing is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not suggesting challenging the Chair. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The question that Ontarians deserve to know is, is the Leader of the Opposition standing with his critic in opposition to 160,000 jobs that we've created, or is he standing with us? When he was in Ottawa, he supported a government that partnered with us on many of those investments. Is he going to flip on this, is he going to flop on this, or is he going to flip-flop all over the place so Ontarians have no idea where he stands—

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

New question.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is for the Premier. People living on reserves in Canada are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than in the rest of Canada. The community of Pikangikum knows this reality better than most after last week's deadly fire that wiped out nine lives—three generations living under one roof.

Does the Premier support the community's calls for an immediate coroner's inquest that will look into the social, economic and cultural factors that led to this tragedy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is going to want to speak to this, but I want to just say that this was a terrible tragedy, and I agree with the community members and with the member of the third party, who sug-

gests that there are very deep-rooted and connected challenges that a community like Pikangikum is facing.

I have been to Pikangikum. I have met with the band council and I am very aware of the advances we must make on education. Pikangikum is one of the communities that doesn't have running water. There is clean water on the reserve but it isn't connected to all of the homes. Those are the challenges that we need to move forward with.

We have strategies in place in terms of investment on the part of the provincial government. I'm very optimistic that now that we have a federal government that is paying attention to this issue we are actually going to make even more progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The community needs to know that just because there are fewer stories being written in the media today that there won't be any less action from the government.

Pikangikum has a fire truck but no running water to its homes, as the Premier mentioned. It has overcrowded, dilapidated homes. The conditions are there today for another deadly fire.

My question is, what is the Premier—not any other level of government, irrespective of any other level of government—going to do to prevent another needless, deadly fire in not only Pikangikum but in other remote First Nation communities throughout Treaty 9 and beyond?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say that the challenges confronting a community like Pikangikum, but Pikangikum in particular, are multifaceted, as the member has said. That is why our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is working across government in terms of economic growth opportunities and health outcome improvement issues. We're developing an aboriginal education strategy because we know that aboriginal indigenous kids are graduating at a much lower rate than the rest of the population.

All of those things are critical. But also critical are very tangible issues like housing, like water, making sure we get communities off boil-water orders, that we hook up the clean water in Pikangikum to communities.

This is a high priority of ours. As I said, now that we have a federal government that's interested in this issue, we'll be able to move forward more quickly.

ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

M. Yvan Baker: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Madame la Ministre, je sais que notre gouvernement est profondément résolu à garantir l'accès à la justice pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Le financement des programmes d'aide juridique est l'une des nombreuses façons dont nous démontrons cet engagement. L'aide juridique permet aux personnes les plus vulnérables de se prendre en charge, en leur donnant le soutien et les services juridiques dont elles ont besoin.

De la représentation dans la salle d'audience elle-même, aux services locaux dans les cliniques communautaires au sein de différents domaines tels que l'aide sociale ou le droit du logement, à des conseils sur les droits et les processus juridiques, Aide juridique Ontario assure que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes à faible revenu ont accès à des services juridiques de haute qualité.

Madame la Ministre, pourriez-vous informer l'Assemblée de la façon dont notre gouvernement améliore l'accès aux services juridiques en Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Centre pour sa question, une question très importante et très appropriée.

Alors, tout comme dans le secteur de la santé et dans d'autres secteurs, je crois que l'accès aux services juridiques doit être basé sur les besoins des gens et non sur les avoirs des citoyens.

La semaine dernière, l'Ontario a augmenté encore une fois le seuil d'admissibilité de l'aide juridique de 6 %. C'était la troisième augmentation de 6 % depuis trois ans. Ensemble, ces trois augmentations permettront à 400 000 Ontariens de plus d'accéder à l'aide juridique. Lorsque cette augmentation de 6 % sera en place, un million de citoyens à faible revenu de plus se qualifieront pour l'aide juridique.

Monsieur le Président, l'amélioration des services juridiques pour les Ontariens les plus vulnérables fait partie des efforts de notre gouvernement pour créer un système de justice plus juste et plus accessible pour les Ontariens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to thank the minister for her response. I'm thrilled to hear that close to half a million Ontarians will benefit from our government's commitment to legal aid.

Like the minister said, access to justice should be determined by need, not by income. Access to legal services improves outcomes in a number of ways for not only the individuals affected but also for the system as a whole. By helping to reduce the number of underrepresented parties in court, the justice system becomes more efficient and more cost-effective.

Could the minister please expand on her current efforts to increase justice for our most vulnerable Ontarians?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci encore au député d'Etobicoke-Centre.

This government is deeply committed to expanding access to legal services for low-income Ontarians. This year's investment amounts to nearly $50 million. This government has invested over $3 billion in Legal Aid Ontario since 2003.

Legal Aid Ontario offers a wide range of legal services to low-income Ontarians and is one of the most comprehensive legal aid systems in Canada. Through this funding, close to half a million more low-income Ontarians will have access to legal aid services.

I'm very proud of this government's efforts on behalf of the province's most vulnerable, and I am committed to

continuing to work with Legal Aid Ontario to ensure that our justice system meets the needs of everyone in this province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the environment minister. Yesterday, the Financial Accountability Officer testified before committee that he is becoming increasingly concerned with this government's lack of transparency, and he issued a warning. Things are only going to get worse. In fact, he reported that he would likely be unable to access government documents that detail projects receiving money from the Liberals' cap-and-trade slush fund.

With this government's record of scandal and secret fundraisers, we know the Liberals cannot be trusted with such a secretive scheme.

Will the minister explain why the Liberals are restricting the ability of the Financial Accountability Officer to investigate their cap-and-trade slush fund?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to offer a caution on the use of words that imply that there are monies available to do different things. It shall not be used in the supplementary, and if it is, I'll stop the question.

Carry on.

1130

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think you'd be hard pressed to find, certainly in any jurisdiction managing cap-and-trade and, quite frankly, in most aspects of the public sector in Canada, money that has to be so accounted for.

First, the money has to be entered into a dedicated account, which can be reviewed by the parliamentary budget officer, the Auditor General, the Environmental Commissioner and many other officers, including members of the House.

As it's expended, it has to be accounted for. Every single project has to have the dollar amount—the cost per millions of dollars of GHG emissions reduced. It has to be aligned with the five-year action plan. We have to file an investment plan that does it every year. It is reviewed by my ministry, when separately evaluated, and then reviewed by the Treasury Board and cabinet.

Could the member suggest any other reviews, or what higher standard? It is higher than Quebec, higher than California, higher than Japan and—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I just did: Financial Accountability Officer access.

Again, back to the minister: The Liberals are forging ahead with their plan to impose a new tax on gasoline and home heating, but they don't want to explain the details to the Financial Accountability Officer.

Instead, behind the cloak of cabinet secrecy, the Liberals plan to funnel $1.9 billion into their cap-and-trade discretionary fund so they can dole out more cash for—you guessed it—their pet projects like more renewable energy.

The minister is restricting the Financial Accountability Officer's access so the government can hide their discretionary funding to companies that attend the Liberals' high-value, $6,000-a-plate fundraisers.

Is this truly what's happening? Can the minister address this? Yes or no?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I work very closely with the Environmental Commissioner. I chatted with her on the phone this week. We work very closely with the parliamentary budget officer.

The parliamentary budget officer has to review all spending plans before they're done and has very broad powers. The parliamentary budget officer has not asked me nor, I believe, asked this government for additional powers. I continually talk to the officers of this Legislature. We are performing at a higher standard than any other.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little confused by the member opposite. The member opposite this morning announced that she wanted to cancel vehicle emissions testing in Ontario so we can't test vehicles for emissions. The member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's almost wrap-up, but the member from Huron–Bruce, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member opposite and her party voted against the cap-and-trade bill with the higher standards. The member opposite has yet to propose a single idea on how to improve transparency, and the reason for that is because we're exceeding all international standards—

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

New question.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question today is to the Minister of Transportation. Ontario's private winter road maintenance contracts extend only to March 31, but last week there was a major snowfall and more plowing was needed. So the contractors got more work and more money even though the government is still trying to collect performance penalties from these same contractors. The government thought the best solution was to hire a company they have already levied fines against for not doing the job properly.

Why are the taxpayers of Ontario giving these private contractors even more work and more money when they still owe millions in penalties for the work they failed to do in the first place?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the question.

A couple of things to remember about our highway maintenance contracts: They are not season-by-season; they are, in fact, year-round contracts. The contractors have a particular contract area, including, for example, the area contract that would cover Niagara Falls. It's a year-round contract.

Specifically, with respect to the equipment complement that's required for winter maintenance: In some parts of the province, including parts of southern Ontario, as of April 1—and this is not new—our contractors in a given area are permitted to actually reduce the complement of equipment that they provide. As of April 1, it would come down to 50%.

Of course, everyone here knows, because I say it repeatedly—and I think this is true of all of us in this Legislature—making sure that our roads and our highways are safe at all times is extremely important. That's why MTO, recognizing the weather forecast had existed prior to March 31 or prior to that last snowfall, reached out to our contractors to make sure that we could be in a position to provide the service that your constituents want, that my constituents want and that the people—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to get a warning.

Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: On the Niagara Falls contractors, as you're aware, they didn't perform their job last year and they have moved on. Long-term contracts are a whole other issue.

Back to the Minister of Transportation: The government has entrusted the safety of our roads to private contractors but is unable to enforce these contracts. Even though these contractors owe the public millions in penalties for poor performance, instead of forcing them to honour the agreements, these contractors get more work.

The minister is stubbornly sticking with his failed privatization system when these millions of dollars in penalties prove that these contractors can't be trusted to do their jobs and keep our roads safe—which is probably the most important thing to this. Why does he insist on sticking with a failed privatized system that endangers our kids and our grandkids?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member, who is my critic, for his follow-up question. Based on the way that the question was conveyed just a moment ago, it sounds to me like there's a little bit of a fundamental misunderstanding on that member's part with respect to how our contracts work.

Having said that, everybody here knows that my number one priority is to make sure that Ontario's roads and highways remain as safe as they've been for the last 13 years, ranking first or second across all North American jurisdictions for safety.

That's why the Ministry of Transportation reached out to the contractors in question to make sure, given that we all knew what the weather forecast was, that we had the equipment necessary to provide that level of safety for the people of Niagara, for the people of Vaughan and for the people of Ontario.

We'll continue to work closely with our contractors. We'll continue to implement our action plan, following up on the Auditor General's recommendations from her report months ago. We'll continue to move forward and improve the program, and I would expect all members on all sides can support that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. On this side of the House we know the importance, and we understand that climate change is not a distant threat to Ontario.

It is an issue I hear a lot about in my riding of Trinity–Spadina. It has devastated communities, damaged homes, businesses and crops, and increased insurance rates. That is why our government is moving forward with a plan to implement a cap-and-trade program in Ontario. It is clear that a cap-and-trade system is the best method for Ontario to reduce GHGs while simultaneously growing our economy.

I understand that our government's public discussion and consultation on cap-and-trade goes back almost a decade. Can the minister please inform the House of what our government has done over the last decade to consult and prepare for cap-and-trade?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I've said a few times that probably the two things that have been most studied in science by human beings are cancer and climate change. There have never been two larger research initiatives, really, in human history.

When our government sees our first auction, with the Legislature of Ontario willingly passing the bill in early 2017, that will celebrate a decade of working on cap-and-trade and carbon financing.

We actually started in 2007 when we joined the Western Climate Initiative and founded what really became the first successful large-scale carbon market. We launched our first cap-and-trade consultations in 2008 in a discussion paper, the first of four discussion papers that we've issued over the last decade.

I will continue in the supplementary, but we work on a weekly basis with environmental groups, consumer groups and industry, drafting this legislation with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for his very important work on the cap-and-trade program.

Coming out of the United Nations conference in Paris last December, I believe there's real momentum in reducing greenhouse gas. Ontario is about to join a global movement towards putting a price on carbon, and it is most effective to be an early adopter. Soon, more than 90% of the Canadian population will be covered by a carbon price. In Ontario, our proposed cap-and-trade will limit pollution, reward innovative companies and create more opportunities for investment in Ontario.

Can the minister please inform the House as to the recent consultations with stakeholders and industry that were undertaken?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Trinity–Spadina, who is my next-door neighbour in the Legislature here, for his leadership. Those of us who

are parents or grandparents fully understand the weight of these issues.

This is an incredible trading opportunity. As you know, we're creating a free-standing marketplace in which there is bidding and allowances. The consultation with financial experts and legal experts is to create this so that it has integrity and the trading happens without fear or favour, based on establishing a real price on carbon sufficient to reduce emissions.

It also involves all Ontarians, all Ontario consumers and businesses, because the pricing system creates opportunities for trade and investment and puts a price on pollution, but it also stimulates investment. So our consultation has to be very detailed.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Huron–Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, concerning the Financial Accountability Officer's access to cap-and-trade funds. This matter will be debated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to make sure everyone understands what a late show is.

This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please join me in welcoming the consul general of Turkey, Mr. Erdeniz Şen, sitting in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just a reminder that Kelly Semkiw and Caleb Ellis are here with their Jersey of Courage. We'll be able to sign the jersey outside the main doors, and it's to make sure that we have a safe workplace in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEEMAN'S

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to rise today and extend some congratulations to Heeman's, an award-winning agri-business in Thorndale. They achieved the 2016 Business Achievement Award at the London Chamber of Commerce last week.

Every year, the London Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Award celebrates the best and brightest of the London business community. The agri-business award recognizes a local business that demonstrates strong achievements in several areas, including environmental responsibility, business strategy, innovation, financial management, employee relations, sustainability, employee training and development, and the business's commitment to the community.

Heeman's is a third-generation family-operated garden and berry centre that has been around since 1963. Aside from offering excellent service and succeeding in business, the Heeman family are strong supporters of the community. I enjoy Will Heeman at the many events he emcees in Thorndale, although I'm always tentative when he's emceeing the election debates.

I have had the opportunity to visit Heeman's on many different occasions to tour, and two years ago I helped celebrate their 50th year of business. Agriculture businesses are the silent drivers of Ontario's economy, and I'm proud to represent a largely rural riding. As a community, we must continue to support small businesses like Heeman's and keep our local economy strong.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to the Heeman family on their award.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to take a moment to share the story of one of my constituents and friends.

"Imagine that your child cannot look you in the eye, wave hello or tell you he loves you. He has difficulty sleeping and often wakes in the night crying but can't tell you why. When he is sick or in pain, he can't describe what hurts. He gets upset at seemingly random changes in his environment, sometimes to the point of sobbing uncontrollably, but can't express the reason. You love him beyond words yet you feel helpless."

These are the words of Dr. Janet McLaughlin, a resident in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, whose son has been diagnosed with autism. Janet's son had waited three years for intensive behaviour therapy and is now one of the many who will no longer have the option of getting the therapy this government promised, because he is over the age of five.

This government offered those families who are being cut off from the program just $8,000 as compensation, when a year of therapy costs upwards of $50,000. There are 16,000 children in this province waiting for intensive behaviour therapy or applied behaviour analysis, the therapies they so desperately need. For these families, this is a very emotional betrayal of trust.

We ask on their behalf for this Liberal government to grandfather the thousands of children who have waited to turn five and honour their commitment of IBI therapy, which provides hope for so many families.

KATYN MASSACRE AND SMOLENSK AIR DISASTER

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: As a Polish Canadian, I'm honoured to rise in the House to commemorate the 76th

anniversary of the Katyn massacre and the sixth anniversary of the Smolensk air disaster.

For the people of Poland, Katyn is an example of the criminal acts of the Soviet system against the Polish nation. In April and May of 1940, more than 20,000 Polish nationals were murdered. This decimated the ranks of the Polish military ruling class and intelligentsia.

Every year at this time, I remember my two great-uncles who were murdered in Katyn. Their loss reminds me of the horrors of war and the price of intolerance and aggression. I think that remembering acts like this should strengthen Canadians' resolve against all forms of hatred and reinforce our commitment to respect and peace.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remember the 96 people, including Polish President Lech Kaczyñski, his wife and high-ranking officials, who were lost in the Smolensk air disaster in 2010. This disaster happened as the president and government officials were en route to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. The airliner crashed short of the airport's runway near Smolensk after hitting trees in heavy fog.

Both the Katyn massacre and Smolensk air disaster are two terrible tragedies which will forever be linked together. This weekend, I am proud to join members of Polonia at Toronto's Canadian Polish Congress commemoration event. I'd like to thank them in advance for organizing this event, where we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their families and country.

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: On March 18, I met with representatives from Wilfrid Laurier University, including its president, Dr. Max Blouw, to discuss Laurier's proposal for a new campus in Milton.

For over 100 years, Laurier has been providing high-quality post-secondary education and showing the way with partnerships with community colleges and other universities. Today, it is one of Canada's fastest-growing universities.

Laurier's vision of a 400-acre Milton Education Village would be a purpose-built, fully integrated urban community of education, research and commercialization, with complementary residential and commercial development and amenities.

A new Laurier campus in Milton would go a long way towards improving access to post-secondary education in our area. As a neighbouring community to the town of Halton Hills, Milton is also located close to Guelph and Wellington county, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga, Brampton and Hamilton.

Milton is the fastest-growing municipality in Canada. But not only is Milton growing; the entire region is experiencing enormous growth. The population of Halton region is expected to exceed one million people by 2041, underscoring the need for new, local post-secondary education opportunities. What better place to locate a new university campus?

The region of Halton recently identified the Laurier Milton campus as one of its top priorities for provincial government action, as I pointed out in this House on February 24. I understand that the town of Halton Hills council is very enthusiastic as well.

As a Laurier alumnus, I share their excitement and fully support their proposal, and I urge the government to get behind it as well.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier once said, "Let them look to the past, but let them also look to the future. Let them look to the land of their ancestors, and let them also look also to the future; let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children."

Let us heed Laurier's exhortation. Let us remember our children, let us look to the future and let us work together to build this new campus.

NIAGARA PARKS SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURE

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise today. Over the weekend, I had the privilege of attending the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture graduation alongside the students, their families, and representatives from the Niagara Parks Commission, along with Chairperson Janice Thomson.

The Niagara Parks School of Horticulture is one of the best programs of its type in the country, and this class of graduates will be proving that in the years to come. The students who go to the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture are an incredible group of young people. Over the course of three years, these students get the education that allows them to work on attractions that millions of people every year come to see. By the end of their schooling, these students are ready and able to work. All across the world, these students are able to walk into jobs straight out of graduation.

1310

Niagara has some of the most beautiful sights to see, and our world-class tourism industry helps to showcase that. The experience the students at Niagara Parks School of Horticulture get from working on these attractions is one of a kind. Only in Niagara do you get to work on world-class attractions as part of your school year. I'm actually a little bit jealous.

To the families of the students and to the teachers, I want to say congratulations on what you've helped them achieve. To the students: I'd like to congratulate them on a job well done and wish them the very best in this exciting next step.

OPENING MINDS THROUGH ART

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you and members of this House information of a very unique program being offered at Trinity Village, a long-term-care facility in Kitchener. Opening Minds through Art is an intergenerational art program for seniors with dementia and run by 12 trained volunteers, many of them local high school students.

Seniors and volunteers are teamed up one-on-one, and over time they build a relationship as these seniors dabble

in painting. After a six-week session, their creations are featured in a gallery exhibition at the museum in downtown Kitchener. This program promotes engagement, autonomy and the dignity of people living with dementia.

At this event, I heard some really incredible personal stories of how this program has made a dramatic impact on people's lives. One person with dementia started speaking for the first time in years, after taking the art classes. Another had reverted back to her mother tongue of Spanish, but managed to regain her ability to speak English again after these classes.

The program instructor told me that people living with advanced dementia have very few choices that they get to make during the day. Other people decide when they eat, when they sleep and when they bathe, but programs like this give those seniors some choices, from the size of paper that they use to the colours that they choose to paint with.

I'm pleased the Opening Minds through Art program at Trinity Village has been able to make such progress, and thanks to the generosity of volunteers in Kitchener Centre.

JUNE FLEMING

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today in remembrance of Ms. June Fleming of Magnetawan. June passed on Monday, March 28, 2016, in her 91st year. I want to honour June today as a loving daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend to all.

June was a selfless, unsalaried ambassador for her church and her community. Alongside her family, June dedicated her life to Trinity United Church. It was very special to her, as she was baptized, confirmed and married in the church. June served as president of the United Church women's organization, sat on the board of stewards, founded the music group and was the organist for more than 45 years.

June's legacy as a successful businesswoman will live on for many years to come. Taking over the family business in 1964, June successfully ran her restaurant, June's, for more than 40 years. A landmark in Magnetawan, June's was a warm, welcoming place for both full-time and summer residents alike. June never refused a meal to anyone. She would lovingly take in less-fortunate community members, providing them with hot meals any time without charge.

In June's retirement at Muskoka Landing retirement home, she was awarded the Making a Difference Award and volunteered to organize entertainment for residents within the home.

June had a reputation that extended far beyond Magnetawan. She left a lasting impression on everyone she met, including myself. She will be greatly missed by all.

REACH OUT CENTRE FOR KIDS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about a tremendous organization that is doing important work across Halton and surrounding communities. The Reach Out Centre for Kids, or ROCK, delivers much-needed mental health services and programs to children and youth who are experiencing emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties.

Statistics show that approximately one in five children and youth in Ontario will face mental health challenges. That's a lot of kids, and they will benefit greatly from the help that ROCK provides. ROCK offers access, access to highly trained health and wellness professionals that can give kids the tools they need to deal with their mental health challenges head-on and thrive in their communities.

Recently, I had the pleasure of joining the member from Oakville to announce additional funding of $230,000 per year. With this funding, ROCK plans to create two new walk-in clinics and hire four additional mental health workers. This means more children in Halton will have access to the right programs and services for their needs.

I've also had the pleasure of touring ROCK facilities in both Oakville and Milton, where I got a first-hand look at some of the incredible work that they're doing. It's wonderful to see how they are able to positively impact the lives of children and youth in my own riding.

ROCK is a leading agency for mental health services for children and is an excellent example of the amazing support services that are out there for kids. I'm proud our government is supporting this vital organization.

REFUGEES

Mr. John Fraser: Earlier this week, thanks to the member from Etobicoke North, we were able to welcome Syrian refugees here in the Legislative Assembly. It was a very proud moment. It was a great moment for them to be here and see how our Legislature works and how our government works.

Last weekend, I had the pleasure, in my community of Ottawa South that's home to many, many new Syrian refugee families, to celebrate and welcome them to Canada. This was put on by the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, or OCISO, as we know it. It was a wonderful event. There were hundreds of children there. It really was quite special. I was glad to be joined by my federal counterpart, David McGuinty, and the local councillor, Riley Brockington. It was really a very truly moving event.

I also want to take this time to thank the class of Featherston school who collected thousands of toys for families. This project was led by their teacher, Mr. Janna, who is really quite an incredible educator and has done a great deal to raise the social consciousness of his students at their elementary school at Featherston. I want to thank them for their work and congratulate them, and of course welcome all refugees to our province.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt, on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: I've got a couple of guests visiting Queen's Park this afternoon, starting with my legislative assistant, Jane Liang; and my staff and constituency office: Jo-Anne Linton, my executive assistant; June Ong; Sam Wong; and Lynn Lui. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am pleased to rise to welcome students and teachers from Epsom and Greenbank public schools. They're from Scugog in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Of course, that's not a point of order, but we always welcome our guests to be here.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 9, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2016-17 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Finance, seven hours and 30 minutes; Ministry of Transportation, seven hours and 30 minutes; Ministry of Health and Long-term Care—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

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

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no. Carry on.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, 15 hours; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 15 hours—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. I didn't hear a no.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to do those things; that's part of the rules. I can't break the rules.

1320

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I'll affix my signature, as I agree with the content of this petition, and I gladly provide it to Diluk.

PERSONS WITH COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all government offices and organizations must be obligated to assist and accommodate persons with communication disabilities;

"Whereas a public system should be established to assist persons with communication disabilities, so that they can access public services, private businesses, and government organizations;

"Whereas legal aid should cover human rights and civil matters. Persons with communication disabilities are more vulnerable, more likely to experience discrimination, and more likely to live in poverty and require legal assistance;

"Whereas private businesses cannot make victims of anyone, particularly those with communication disabilities. Presently there is no protection for them, and they are continually taken advantage of;

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

"A public system must be established to assist persons with communication disabilities through legislation. The legislation must be written to hold accountability at all levels of service to assist or guide the communication-disabled with the help of a public system of experts. Advocacy for people with disabilities makes for a better society, one that makes room for everyone."

I'm going to sign this. I give it to Sabrina to be delivered to the table.

CAREGIVERS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations.

"Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

"Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

"Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

"Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas's bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario."

I agree with this, I will affix my name to it and send it with page Joshua.

PRÉPOSÉS AUX SERVICES DE SOUTIEN PERSONNEL

M^me^ Gila Martow: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que les préposés aux services de soutien personnel sont le plus grand groupe de travailleurs de la santé non réglementé au Canada; et

« Attendu que les PSSP prennent soin des citoyens les plus vulnérables, y compris les personnes âgées en soins de longue durée, soignées à la maison, dans les hôpitaux et les maisons de retraite, et les adultes handicapés dans les logements supervisés; et

« Attendu que les PSSP sont de plus en plus en demande et ils sont un élément clé d'un système de santé durable; et

« Attendu que les PSSP ne possèdent pas de curriculum, de champ de pratique ou de normes de pratique; et

« Attendu que les PSSP doivent effectuer une des tâches les plus importantes dans les soins de santé sans les outils appropriés;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« De désigner les préposés aux services de soutien personnel comme une profession de la santé réglementée et de promulguer la législation appropriée. »

Je vais la signer et la donner au page Sohan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your recent appointment to that chair.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a five-park system totalling 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor's remaining natural areas;

"Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk—over 20% and 32% for Ontario and Canada's species at risk respectively. It represents Canada's, and the world's, most endangered ecosystem;

"Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site—over 700 plant types (100 are rare ...), over 3,000 insects, 233 bird species with breeding evidence for 71 species, and 16 mammals;

"Whereas Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (OPPNR) are two of the parks in the complex adjacent to the proposed development. These parks are: (1) designated as natural heritage, environmentally significant areas, and in the case of the OPPNR, a provincially significant wetland ... and an area of natural and scientific interest...; (2) protect biodiversity by hosting: eight endangered and 12 threatened species in Canada;

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

"To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this land, so that the land will be protected and so too will the 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species on schedule 1 of the Endangered Species Act."

I fully agree. I'll sign my name and give it to my buddy Jack to bring up to the front.

LUNG HEALTH

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

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

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

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

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition. I am affixing my signature and giving it to page Deanna.

1330

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by $37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional $133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing $1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

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

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

Madam Speaker, I have affixed my signature as well to this petition, as I support it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the decision to close the Welland general hospital was made without consultation with the residents of south Niagara, and without regard for potential social and economic impacts of this closure; and

"Whereas the recommendations to the government contained in Dr. Kevin Smith's report on restructuring of the Niagara Health System included no evidence to support the closure of the Welland general hospital; no needs assessment for the residents of south Niagara; no costing of the entire restructuring plan; and no proposals to mitigate the impact of reduced hospital access;

"Whereas the catchment area of the Welland general hospital includes four municipalities, with a population of over 90,000, including a high percentage (+25%) of seniors and people living in poverty;

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

"(1) Stop the planned closure of the Welland general hospital;

"(2) Conduct a proper third-party evidence-based study to assess the present and projected health care and hospital services requirements of residents in the catchment area of the Welland general hospital;

"(3) Hold public consultations, not only during the assessment process, but also on recommendations resulting from this study."

I support this petition and affix my signature and send it with page Madeline.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and you do look good in the big chair.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture.... Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified....

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

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services adequately to meet the demand for their counselling and public education programs; ... and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

Madam Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign it and hand it to page Harry.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to the member from York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I wanted to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair."

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

Thank you. As I have agreed with this, I'll affix my signature and give it to page Zachary.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition was sent to me from Julie Ding. It says:

"Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

"Whereas some families are being forced to remortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to Cooper to bring to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO DOWN SYNDROME DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE ONTARIENNE DE LA TRISOMIE 21

Mr. Dickson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day / Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant la Journée ontarienne de la trisomie 21.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Dickson has moved second reading of Bill 182, an Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I guess, Madam Speaker, I was perhaps the first person to curtsy to you in the chair. So congratulations.

First of all, through you, Madam Speaker, if I may, I'd like to introduce some special guests with us in the audience today. The young lady standing up at the far left is a very special grandmother. We're going to call her Granny. We could almost call her a great-granny because she is great. That is Irene Turpie. The two other young ladies beside her are Jennifer Crowson, mother, with her son, Owen Crowson, and, next to her, Ingrid Muschta and her son, Alexander. It's good to have all of you here. Thank you very much.

I'm going to tell you who my speakers are today. Dr. Helena Jaczek, who is our Minister of Community and Social Services, is one. The representative from Durham region, MPP Granville Anderson, is another. He has been very involved in social service work for years. And in front of me is Dr. Shafiq Qaadri, the MPP for Etobicoke North—

Interjection.

Mr. Joe Dickson: He is extremely intense, and one of our two doctors speaking. It goes without saying that our colleagues, PC and NDP, will have excellent presenters as well, as they always do.

It's nice that I can acknowledge a couple of people before we get into the actual Down syndrome bill. I should mention, because this has been ongoing for a number of years and finally should be cleared up today, that we've had people who have strongly supported Down Syndrome Day and support for this health issue. Current Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister McMeekin has been active on this file for many, many years through a previous ministry, and he has expertise in social events as well, so he has worked on housing for that. I thank the minister.

1340

Also, Madam Speaker, our current Minister of Agriculture, Jeff Leal, who has been active in his community for some 30 years, has just been feted there by all parties. All of us were represented there. He actually initiated the first funding for the Down Syndrome Association of Peterborough. He's done a great job.

Speaking of Peterborough, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Debbie Reid, who has been the president up there for many years, and the great assistance that she has provided to me.

Madam Speaker, on some of the challenges that our good friends with Down syndrome have faced: If they're at the poverty line, ODSP is $865 a month or $11,000 a year. You can't really exist on that, and we know that here. Also, when it's work employment support through the ODSP office, it sometimes takes a long time. Quite simply, if there's someone out there who has a problem, please just contact your MPP for your representative area. They know where to go and how to assist you.

School boards don't have special funding, and most families cannot afford a speech pathologist at $150 an hour, so they're limited in what they can do.

I just have to also say that my wife, Donna, was a young registered nurse and recalls how for 50 years people were encouraged to give up Down syndrome children. They were not part of society. My, how society has changed for the better. We now embrace all children, as we should, and we should do it even more.

In Ajax, there is ARC Industries, which has a lot of work provided for mentally challenged people. I can tell you, having spoken to them on many occasions and having taken the odd family out for lunch, that they continue to do good, and that grows on an ongoing basis.

I think at this point I'd maybe like to just briefly mention some of the challenges that are there, and then I will—I don't think I actually read off which doctors were going to be here, or did I? Yes, I did. I did mention them.

Down syndrome is known as trisomy 21, a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement in which a person has three copies of the 21st chromosome. Approximately one in 800 babies are born in Ontario with Down syndrome.

People with Down syndrome experience varying degrees of intellectual delays and lower muscle tone. Some people with Down syndrome can experience cardiovascular and gastrointestinal difficulties, usually in the first year of life. Having two doctors speaking to this today, they may wish to expand on that.

But further, people with Down syndrome have faced discrimination in Ontario and around the world. Half a century ago, people with Down syndrome were denied the right to an education, were given inadequate health care and were placed in institutions where their life expectancy was approximately 25 years. People with Down syndrome are people first and share the same human rights as every other citizen in Ontario. They should be persons first and share the same human rights with every other person in Ontario.

Advances in medicine and social movements challenging discrimination have improved the life experiences and expectancy of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome are now living into their sixties and seventies. People with Down syndrome are active, contributing citizens of the province of Ontario. Children with Down syndrome are attending mainstream schools and are learning to read and write alongside their peers. Young adults with Down syndrome are attending college and living independently, and some are gainfully employed.

At this point I'd just also like to mention another family friend of ours who had an infant son with Down syndrome. I know the family personally. It was many years back. In those days—as I indicated just previously—many decades ago, parents were encouraged to have their child in an institution.

These parents with several children that I know kept their son and the other son that they had. The parents loved and treated Howie warmly for all of his life. He lived to be age 56. He died 10 and a half years ago. I remember him as a very special friend. He changed the entire family. The entire family belonged to Howie, and he belonged to them.

I wish I had the time to tell you a story—he comes from a family rich in hockey talent, out of Oshawa. I can't tell the story because it would take too long, but Howie, who had Down syndrome, was caught by the TV

cameras the night that Bobby Orr and the Boston Bruins won the Stanley Cup because one of Howie's brothers just happened to be the captain of the Boston Bruins. Howie wouldn't give up the Stanley Cup. I'll save that story for another day, but it's just a precious moment when Bobby Orr has him on his knee and they don't want to part. Bobby was a good friend of their family as well.

I met a very special lady—my gosh, where does the time go? I met a very special lady by the name of Katherine. I spent an evening with her and her mother. Her nickname is Kassy. Her loving parents are Donna and Bruce. Kassy has two giant brothers. Her puppy is Tasha, a Maltese-Shih Tzu breed. Kassy just graduated from Clarington high school in November—grade 12. She's very active in learning; she never stops. She has taken leadership training; financial training, referenced as Money Math; and the life lunches program, where you work with other students and help them. She has many great friends. She loves working with children, particularly Community Living employment support. She has first aid, CPR—I could go on for ever and ever; she actually skis. She skis at Brimacombe. I have to tell you, once you spend some quality time with that child—she's a young lady now—you appreciate how great they are and how special they are to all of us. It was an honour for me to be with Kassy and her mother.

Some of the other numbers that are very important out there are the number of babies that are born with Down syndrome universally across racial and gender lines, and that's one in every 800 babies. The average IQ of a young adult with Down syndrome is 50, equivalent to the mental age of an eight-to-nine-year-old child. As you know, adults are generally in the range IQ-wise of 110 to 120.

There is no cure for Down syndrome. We need education, proper care and awareness to show improvement in quality of life. According to the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, people with Down syndrome are now living well beyond 55; they're completing high school, getting better jobs—skillful jobs—and gaining meaningful employment. The goal is to dispel myths, raise awareness and recognize the contributions that people with Down syndrome make in our communities.

Further down the road: November 1 to 7 is National Down Syndrome Awareness Week. I've already asked my staff to commence working on that, pursuing any way that we could help to promote that. If that was the case—if possible—I would then approach the two opposition parties and ask them to co-author a bill so it would be that much quicker and more appropriate. It would be totally representative of this House.

Something I should mention is that during National Down Syndrome Awareness Week there's a Go21 walk held across Canada. It's significant because people with Down syndrome have that extra chromosome on the 21st chromosome, and "Go, go, go" is part of their cheer, cheering people on and raising awareness absolutely everywhere.

The very last thing I think I'll say, Madam Speaker, is that I've heard different mothers and fathers speak. I've listened to them. One of them in particular said to me, "We'll eat macaroni and cheese for the rest of our lives so it will allow for extra money for health care, for the protection and care of our special child"—loving care from very special parents. We should never forget that.

1350

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations as well.

I add my name in support of Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day.

March 21 will become, I would hope, the catalyst for continuing discussion and improving the depth of dialogue and the necessary services and support of this condition. What's clear is that in my lifetime, the understanding has changed so much, but we still have such a long way to go. Decades ago, it was not uncommon for families to protect children with this syndrome, but we've advanced so much, haven't we, Speaker?

Today, as they should, children with this syndrome attend school, play a part in the decisions that affect them, work, vote and contribute to society in a host of ways. Yet there remain many challenges that still need to be addressed.

As an example, special services at home: Families can receive funding when their children are under 18, but those services end on an individual's 18th birthday. Families must then apply for new funding through the Passport program, which still has wait-lists. Some children with Down syndrome may require extra supports at school, but the special education funding formula is not meeting the requirements of special-needs students, and educational assistants have been let go across provincial school boards, as an example.

My good friend Mark Wafer, a resident of my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, for many years has played a significant role as a workplace disability agent. Mark owns several Tim Hortons stores in the GTA. Currently, over 20% of his employees have disabilities. In fact, his longest-serving employee has Down syndrome. Mark describes him often as his best employee.

I'd like to also talk about research. The research is clear that people with Down syndrome benefit from early, coordinated, inclusive and targeted interventions to support their development and foster success. Furthermore, where children and adults with Down syndrome or other disabilities are given opportunities to participate, all children and adults benefit in the environment of friendship, acceptance and respect for everyone, and high expectations are created.

Going forward, this particular motion and bill, as it speaks to this special day, I think speaks to what we, as a party, are looking for with respect to the types of supports for children with Down syndrome. This is a disorder, not a disease. Let's support those who have the syndrome by proclaiming March 21 as Ontario Down Syndrome Day. I look forward to further discussion with my colleague opposite on his suggestions in terms of the co-sponsoring of a bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill today, Bill 182, the Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016. The bill is long overdue, and recognizing this day is very important for those who have Down syndrome, their families and their communities. I think that it will help to reduce—reverse, hopefully—some of the negative attitudes, discrimination and social exclusions that people actually suffer.

I wanted to tell a quick story; I've only got a couple of minutes. Our guests here today probably saw, if they saw the Toronto Sun or the Niagara papers this week, a young man in my community, Tony Yorfido. He is a huge fan of Steven Tyler, formerly from Aerosmith. Anthony is from Welland. He happened to be in Niagara Falls and they were in a store. Steven Tyler was going to be playing at Casino Niagara. And who walked into the store but Steven Tyler, so the mother and Anthony made their way over to Steven Tyler to get their pictures taken.

He found out that he didn't have tickets and invited him to actually come backstage, get up on the stage, and play the maracas during a song. Certainly that's the kind of inclusion that we need to see in our communities.

I also wanted to talk about the local Casa Dante Lodge 19 in my riding that does a lot of work supporting Special Olympics in Niagara. Every Friday night, they use their hall to hold dances for the Special Olympics so that they can raise money for the young people to participate in a lot of sporting activities. I can tell you that I've been to many a dance and I've played many a bocce ball game as well over the years, trying to do my bit in supporting that group of people.

Interestingly enough, when we were doing a little research for this bill, we also found out that there is an increasing number of Down syndrome children with autism. We've been talking about autism here in the Legislature. Unfortunately, it's a little harder to diagnose, but I'm sure that some of my colleagues will want to weigh in on that piece.

I just want to shout out to a couple of other agencies in Niagara. The Pathstone Mental Health facility does a great job. Community Living Welland Pelham, as well as Bethesda—all great, non-profit community agencies that actually support people with Down syndrome who have dual diagnoses or support them at Community Living with all kinds of life activities and social activities.

It's a pleasure to have had the opportunity to say a few words. I totally support this bill, as I'm sure everyone will here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and it's a real pleasure to see you in the chair for the first time.

I also want to thank the member for Ajax–Pickering for bringing this bill forward to shine a light on those with Down syndrome. Of course, it is one of many developmental disabilities, but perhaps it's one of the most recognizable in terms of the appearance of people with Down syndrome and I think a very well-known genetic background to it.

We have seen a real transformation in our society in terms of our approach to those with developmental disabilities. When I graduated from medical school in the mid-1970s, I can truly say that society was very divided. At that point in time, there were still individuals with Down syndrome being institutionalized, whose parents felt they couldn't cope and felt that this was their only alternative. But at the same time, it was the beginning of the growth of the Community Living movement. In those days, 50 or 40 years ago, there was growing awareness of the abilities of those with Down syndrome, so instead of focusing on the developmental disabilities side, there was focus on the abilities of these individuals.

That is certainly the way our government and my ministry with responsibility for those with developmental responsibilities view all individuals in society. We are trying to ensure that we have the most inclusive society that we possibly can. To this end, we have closed the institutions that existed here in this province for those with developmental disabilities. We've established, to the extent possible, independent living, perhaps with some support. We know that parents, caregivers, extended families of those with Down syndrome are often very anxious about the future. As has been referenced, those with developmental disabilities are living longer, thanks to modern medicine and all the interventions that have occurred over the past few decades.

Independent living with some supports is an ideal. As we know with those with Down syndrome, there is a spectrum of severity of certain conditions, health conditions, intellectual ability and so on, just as there is with the rest of us. Therefore, in some cases, we need group homes and some specialized support for these individuals.

In terms of what I've seen since I became minister, the next frontier is employment. We know that so many with developmental disabilities are fully able to participate in the competitive workforce. It is not only for the potential remuneration that we encourage employment; it is to be part of society. It's to be part of what everyone wants to be, to have a job, a home and a friend. This is the philosophy of our ministry. I'm delighted that the member has put this private member's bill forward, and I will be fully supporting it.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the member from Ajax–Pickering—his private member's bill, Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act.

It's just so interesting to hear some of the different personalities and the different experiences that people bring to the debates here in the House. I, myself, was an optometrist, whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services just spoke about her career in medicine. We both had many patients with Down syndrome or

patients who had family members with Down syndrome, and I can attest to the fact that there is a wide range of different abilities and personalities. I think a sunny disposition is a great way to describe some of the patients that I saw with Down syndrome, but not necessarily all of them.

There's no cure, as the member from Ajax-Pickering said, because it's not a disease. There's no reason to even look for a cure. It's not a disease; it's a genetic chromosomal anomaly, as I would say. Often, people like to use the word "defect." I do not.

As the minister said, all of us have different abilities and different interests. In a way, it's just more people in society who often might have some challenges, both physical and intellectual, but that's no different from the rest of us and our family members and friends and constituents.

I just want to touch a little bit on all the fantastic success stories that are out there of people with Down syndrome. One of them that comes to mind so quickly for me and my daughter, who loved to watch the TV series Glee, of course, is the very well-known Lauren Potter, who played the Cheerios's co-captain on the show. She was an integral part of the show. It was just wonderful to see her playing that part and having some of the really witty acting lines. Jamie Brewer is another American actress with Down syndrome who played in the television series American Horror Story. She is also one of the first known Down syndrome models to walk down at New York Fashion Week.

I just want to touch a little bit on the story of Tim Harris. Tim is the owner of his own restaurant called Tim's Place. In high school, he was elected homecoming king by the highest margin of votes in the school's history. Obviously, Tim has Down syndrome, and that's why I'm talking about him today. He was also named student of the year. What a fantastic school and faculty that must have been.

He dreamed of owning a restaurant, so he found jobs in the industry and learned as much as he could. One restaurant he worked at, the Red Robin, said that the revenues would absolutely skyrocket on Tim's shifts. I saw a TV show where they told the story of Tim, and you could see why. Everybody who came into the restaurant was giving him a hug or a joke and had a real personal connection to Tim.

He graduated from college with certificates in food services, office skills and restaurant hosting. In addition, he created Tim's Big Heart Foundation to help other people with disabilities start their own businesses.

As the minister said, the next frontier is employment. In Thornhill, we have DANI, which is Developing and Nurturing Independence. It is focused on helping individuals not necessarily just with Down syndrome but individuals who have special needs find the skills they need so that they can be independent and have employment. Their focus is on the DANI Café, which I hosted an event at recently.

Ángela Bachiller, in 2013 in Spain, became the first person with Down syndrome to be elected a councilwoman. I want to remind people that not only could you be elected when you have Down syndrome—now it's 2016—but you vote as well if you have Down syndrome or any other challenges in your life.

I think that we would certainly welcome to see pages, and maybe the parents who are listening here today—maybe that's something that we can work on, a program here. Maybe not exactly the page program, but maybe there is some kind of program that we can initiate here in the Legislature for kids who have some challenges. We have to put our money where our mouth is sometimes and practise what we preach.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker—madame la Présidente—and félicitations for being in the chair. Welcome.

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

The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. That's going to take some time for all of us to get used to.

I am pleased to be able to stand today to speak to Bill 182 and to welcome some folks from Hamilton and the Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations on this day.

Thank you to the member from Ajax–Pickering for bringing this bill forward. As my colleague said, it's absolutely about time that we're getting around to this. I'm thrilled, I have to say, that he has kept it at March 21, which is in line with national Down Syndrome Day. We just celebrated the 11th anniversary of national Down Syndrome Day, and I hope that everybody had the ability to rock some socks in awareness of Down syndrome, because that's definitely what this is really all about. It's about awareness. It's about where we are moving into the future.

I have to say that when I heard previous members talk about a time of segregation, it is something that I'm blessed that I don't know about. I don't know what segregation means in my own world. I'm very blessed to have a family that—I have a cousin with disabilities, and there was inclusivity. There was nothing different about my cousin. That is the way that I was raised, and this is the generation that I see happening today, and it makes me very proud to be a part of it.

I'm not going to talk about Down syndrome and what Down syndrome is. What I am going to talk about is awareness. I'm going to talk about my city of Hamilton, and the great Down syndrome walk that we have every year. It's pretty much like a carnival, for the excitement and the community and the organizations that come together. It brings extra funds in, too, for speech pathology, for other supports that families need—occupational therapy. These are things that families struggle for and that families need those extra funds for, because they're just not there. Organizations like this, and days like this, make those happen and make it better for families.

There's a national campaign that Hamilton is part of, and it's called Go21. "Go" is used to celebrate the advancement and the strength of the Down syndrome

community. The "21" is used to represent the 21st chromosome, which is the determination of the diagnosis. Great work, to the Hamilton folks for always being there. I'm really honoured to be able to participate in that event.

Being part of that event has allowed me the privilege of many new friends in my life. I have to give a huge shout-out to the Fab Five, because all of you received my Christmas card last year, and the photo was with the Fab Five. I'm going to give a huge shout-out to Ben Martin, David Colantino, Michael Mastragostino, Peter Oddi and Aaron Arnold. Thanks, guys, for always being there and being my pals. They're fantastic.

I also have to mention a couple of other individuals who I spend a lot of time with. It's my Hamilton skating club for the Special Olympics, and Nicole Vespa and Tim Goodale, who are two folks with Down syndrome. They participate every time there is a national event. They just came back from Newfoundland with more medals than we can count. I can't even imagine what the bedrooms in their homes look like, with all the medals and trophies for their great work.

That's all about integration, Speaker. That's what this is all about. It's about how we are making sure that everybody can participate in our society and have that wholesome experience.

I don't have a lot of time. I really want to talk about the Montoya family and my support for them. I know this is a federal issue, where the Montoya family is being told that it's possible they will not be able to get their citizenship here in Canada. It concerns me. Their son, Nico, has Down syndrome, and the government is saying that it could possibly be a weight on our system, so they're going to send him home.

I'm going to finish with a quote from Rick Mercer. I'm going to be very proud to say this: My Canada deserves an extra chromosome.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill today, setting up Ontario Down Syndrome Day. I want to congratulate the member from Ajax. It reminds me of a friend of mine, Linda Smith, who suffered from a developmental exceptionality and passed away earlier this year. She taught me a lot of things.

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The reason that I like this bill is it reminds us of a lot of things, which a lot of members have said here today, our responsibilities and how families are coping. But most importantly, people with exceptionalities have an exceptional capacity for forgiveness, love and acceptance, and that's something we can learn from them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I also commend my colleague from Ajax–Pickering for presenting this legislation and for drawing attention to this very, very important cause. He came to me and asked me to do this, and it was indeed a pleasure and an honour to do this. Some of the folks he interviewed were from my riding of Durham, from Courtice to be exact. I wish they were here today, but they are not. I have seen a couple of families here today that fully represent what Down syndrome is all about. I had the honour of meeting Owen and Alexander, who are two of the most adorable children you would ever want to meet. I would recommend or suggest to my colleagues that they go over and say hi to these two lovely children.

Bill 182 is An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day, which would establish March 21 of every year as an occasion to raise awareness of trisomy 21 and of its effects on individuals and families, but also of their capacity to succeed and their potential for growth. Madam Speaker—I almost said "Mister"; I'm sorry—as a school board trustee for over 12 years, I served on SEAC because I added value to this. I know the importance of helping kids with disabilities and kids with special needs to reach their full potential, and to grow and to become wonderful, great members of our society as much as possible.

It has always been a passion of mine to make sure that our young children, especially kids with special needs, have the ability to succeed in life. That's what this bill ought to do, and that's what this bill will do: create awareness to that.

Many of us who work with youth know that many individuals with Down syndrome are living beyond young adulthood and well into their middle age.

I see the member from Ajax–Pickering is looking at me. I guess my time is up. I could go on about this all day.

Again, I am so grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill. This bill has my full support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's delightful to be in the House the day that you assume the chair.

I'm truly pleased to speak in support of Bill 182, the Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016. I'm bringing greetings on behalf of our critic Randy Pettapiece, the member from Perth–Wellington, and all of my caucus who are proud to support our good colleague Mr. Dickson from Ajax–Pickering. I know he has two sisters in Owen Sound, in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and tells them that I'm his favourite MPP from Owen Sound. It's only my right place to be here helping him out.

When this bill goes through, it will proclaim March 21 each year in Ontario as Ontario Down Syndrome Day. March 21 also serves as World Down Syndrome Day and will help raise awareness of what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities, and also their family and friends.

From my perspective, major issues for persons with disabilities include getting a quality education, access to community-based quality residential living services, getting a meaningful job and, most importantly, being included. As my colleague just said, we welcome the 21st chromosome. It's absolutely critical now.

In my former life, I was a recreation director and had the privilege and honour to work very closely with groups like Community Living. Many of the folks there lived with Down syndrome, and I have to tell you, they brought so much warmth and delight to our lives. They give so much to us.

I think what I want to focus on a little bit is what we need to be doing as a government to ensure that there's more of those services. Many of my critic roles have been to talk about those who need the services and programs. I just did an interview with City TV in regard to assistive devices; there was $20 million cut from that program, which really impacts their lives. I think we should be doing more for them.

My colleague Sylvia Jones, from Dufferin–Caledon, talked about the cuts to the autism budget, which again impacts five-year-olds who have been on a waiting list, and now all of a sudden they're off that list.

There are 23,000 people on a developmental services list and about 66,000 people in Ontario with autism, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, cerebral palsy and other intellectual disabilities. There's a lot of concern, a lot of challenges.

The unshippable.ca campaign is to raise awareness about the current residential crisis of people being shipped out of their communities because of the lack of available services. When I was community and social services critic, I had a lot of families coming, particularly the aging parents of people who needed those support services, and wondering what was going to happen when they moved on in life.

In my backyard, we had educational systems, and many of the parents came to me, very concerned. Lisa Weidner of Hanover's son Marrick has Down syndrome. I'm going to quote her: "One of my greatest fears is the lack of contained support. Marrick has just started to walk, stands at a little over three feet. He has some verbal language skills but uses signing more often. He is our pride and joy, we are confident given proper support that he will excel in school! But ... he needs that one-on-one in order to achieve all we believe is possible...."

I fought for that. I wanted to ensure that those programs and services remained there. At the end of the day, there's an urgent need to properly fund services and programs for people with developmental disabilities.

The Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs, OASIS, continues to call on the government to provide stable, increased and long-term funding to see that people get the services they need and deserve. That lack of funding will have a huge impact.

In closing, again, I'm congratulating my colleague. I think it's a wonderful initiative that he has begun. I want to do what I'm doing to support him as a catalyst. I believe it should serve as a catalyst to ensure that we discuss areas of improvement.

People with Down syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them, have meaningful relationships, vote and contribute to society in so many wonderful ways, and I believe, truly, put a smile on our faces.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new appointment.

I will take the few minutes remaining to read into the record a letter from one of my constituents. Her name is Susan Eldridge-Vautour, and I promised her I would read this:

"Dear France:

"I am the parent of a 19-year-old son who has Down syndrome. He is a delight. I never want to be perceived as complaining about him because he has enriched our lives" so much.

"However, today I am going to complain about the lack of supports for him. As an infant and as a child, Jason received a great number of services from a variety of agencies and for that our family is grateful. As Jason approached adulthood, I began to search out his options for life beyond school. He is allowed to attend until the age of 21, which for him means he has this year and next before he 'ages out.' Initially, I thought he might attend the 'Building Bridges' program at Cambrian College.

"However, several years ago that program was discontinued. I began to look for other options and became comfortable with possibly preparing him for work at the Jarrett Resource Centre. We could get him a co-op" placement at the school he's currently attending. "It is nearby and it is a realistic option for someone with Jason's level of ability. Unfortunately, I've just learned of the expected closures of the Jarrett centres. I will be attending the information meeting ... however I'm not very optimistic.

"You may be aware that in recent months, there has been frustration expressed by parents of individuals with special needs over the decision to disqualify people with intellectual needs from riding the Handi-Transit, making that service exclusively for those with physical needs. The idea was to accommodate individuals with developmental needs within the regular transit system. Of course, no changes have been made, no services added to the regular transit system in order to serve that particular population.

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"As Jason approached 18, I jumped through all the necessary hoops to have him lined up for adult services. He has been on a waiting list for Passport funding ever since. This funding could pay for a special needs worker to help" Jason train for transit, for example.

"I don't think it appropriate that in less than two years, we will be faced with the possibility of leaving Jason alone at home all day to fend for himself without support, without meaningful tasks to complete, with no peers to interact with. He can watch The Big Bang Theory on TV for hours on end and find snacks while my husband and I are at work, worrying about him.

"I'm aware that I've presented you with several divergent issues which are not even handled by the same level of government, but I see it all looming. One big ball of concern that I can do nothing about. Our society is

responsible for assisting its citizens, all of them, especially the ones who can't write a coherent letter or present an articulate voice at a meeting."

I wanted to share her letter because this is 2016. Having a child with Down syndrome still comes with challenges: challenges with the Passport Program, challenges with supported housing, challenges with trying to find them a day program, and challenges trying to find jobs—meaningful employment—for people who have Down syndrome.

I believe that the bill that hopefully will be passed this afternoon will help us all focus on March 21 and every other day as to what we can do as a society to make those challenges a thing of the past—the sooner, the better.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madame la Présidente, congratulations on your ascension to the throne there.

Honoured table officers, my colleague from Ajax–Pickering, the honourable Joe Dickson, who is bringing forward this bill to bring attention to Down syndrome—I want to congratulate you, Mr. Dickson, on what I think is not only an overdue but very well-thought-out and much-needed stimulus to support and recognize and honour and celebrate all the members of the Down syndrome community.

I have to say that this is perhaps typical for the member for Ajax–Pickering. As you may notice, his licence plate is actually "VIPER"—and that bears exactly no relationship to this bill but I did have to mention it.

« Le syndrome de Down, également connu sous le nom de trisomie 21, est une anomalie chromosomique d'origine naturelle qui se caractérise par la présence chez une personne d'un chromosome surnuméraire dans la 21e paire chromosomique. Approximativement un sur 800 nourrissons nés en Ontario a le syndrome de Down. On note chez les personnes trisomiques divers degrés de déficience intellectuelle et un plus faible tonus musculaire. Certaines personnes trisomiques peuvent éprouver des difficultés cardiovasculaires et gastro-intestinales, habituellement au cours de la première année de vie. »

Down syndrome has been recognized officially as a medical condition since the year 1866, originally in Britain by the physician and doctor John Langdon Down, hence the name. The chromosomal abnormality was actually identified officially by a French physician, Jérôme Lejeune, in 1959.

I might just highlight, for a moment, a quick biological lesson. All human beings generally have 46 pairs of chromosomes, as you, Madam Speaker, would know as a nurse yourself. Unfortunately, on occasion, there is a triplication of one of these chromosomes. It is chromosome 21, which by the way contains 329 genes. That is why March—meaning month three—21 is the day that has been chosen to proclaim as Down Syndrome Day.

I think I would have to echo my colleagues that the conceptualization or the thoughts around Down syndrome have a deep and perhaps not very noble history. If you look back hundreds of years, when it was recognized as, for example, a very nasty kind of condition, it was not really thought that folks with Down syndrome would be able to participate, would survive for too long, would be able to live independent lives, would vote and marry and graduate and participate as full members of society. But as the Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a different context, it's 2016.

So with that, I think that with a bill such as proclaimed today by my honourable colleague from Ajax–Pickering, we, as physicians, as legislators and as individuals who have the stewardship for the conversation that Ontario and Canada broadly have need to not only proclaim 03/21 as Down Syndrome Day—as, by the way, was proclaimed not too long ago by the United Nations General Assembly; we need to find more opportunities, just as we're striving in other areas, whether it's autism and so on, to allow individuals, their families and, of course, the mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who are here today to be able to celebrate, to put away the stigma, and to help foster a more inclusive, integrated and generally happier society, particularly with regard to this particular condition, which, of course, can and often does lead to a number of different challenges, both social, intellectual, biological and medical.

Madam Speaker, I would say that this is an important bill. It's very much, I think, part of the thrust of the inclusivity of Premier Wynne and the Liberal government, and something that I can support in both a medical as well as parliamentary capacity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Ajax–Pickering to do a two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to recognize and say thank you to everyone from the various ridings who spoke so eloquently here today. That would be Whitby–Oshawa, Kenora–Rainy River, Thornhill, the Minister of Community and Social Services, Hamilton Mountain, Durham, Ottawa South, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Nickel Belt and Etobicoke North. You have said—you have all said—that we have to raise the bar, and I appreciate those comments. I appreciate your words. I appreciate what you've done today.

I think maybe, in closing, I'd like to make a remark from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations: "We believe that people with Down syndrome should be allowed to pursue meaningful lives in their communities. We believe that all aspects of society should accept and include individuals with Down syndrome fully. We believe that new and expectant parents should have access to the latest, most accurate information about having and raising a child with Down syndrome. We believe that people with Down syndrome should not be defined by their disabilities, but rather should be celebrated for their abilities."

I think I'll just reread that last sentence: "We believe that people with Down syndrome should not be defined by their disabilities, but rather should be celebrated for their abilities."

Thank you, fellow members. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll deal with the vote at the end of this particular session.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should commit to raising awareness of the threats caused by increased levels of ice melting in the Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions as part of this province's commitment to combatting climate change and its negative impacts on northern Ontario ecosystems.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Berardinetti has moved private member's notice of motion number 68. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to congratulate you on your new post. It's good that you come from a riding in Scarborough. Scarborough is going to be well represented.

I just wanted to start by saying that I believe that continuing to raise awareness and engaging in meaningful discourse are an important forward step in the ongoing battle against climate change. I'm proud to bring this motion forward as a way of encouraging and stimulating this key component of a responsible and effective climate strategy.

The science around climate change is clear, and skeptics of the underlying evidence are now, thankfully, very few and far between. The international community has acted boldly, holding key talks and global summits meant to stimulate further discussions and create meaningful solutions to back us away from the brink of an environmental catastrophe. Climate change threatens us all. As such, we all have a responsibility to work together to meet this challenge head-on.

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The people of Ontario have been directly affected. Communities have been severely damaged. Homes have been lost. Crops and businesses have struggled. Entire industries are facing setbacks. It hasn't always been easy, but Ontario has and continues to be a leading force in the fight against climate change. But there's always more to be done. Even though the science underlying climate change is now almost universally accepted—except for the Republican Party in the United States—there is a risk of becoming complacent or satisfied with the progress we've made. We must remain mindful not only of the human or economic costs of climate change, but the ecological ones as well.

I'm sure all of us in this House can agree that Ontario is blessed with unmatched natural beauty, which makes it all the more pressing that we continue to raise awareness of lesser-known regions in the province under environmental threat.

The Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions are two such examples. These bays are the largest bodies of water in the world that seasonally freeze up each winter and become ice-free each summer. In Hudson's Bay, the ice cover starts to form in northern areas by the end of October and continues to grow until maximum coverage is reached by April. In James Bay, the ice cover begins to decay in late May and nearly becomes ice-free by the end of July.

One of the key features of these regions is that they are home to one of the most majestic species of animals we have in this province. I'm talking, of course, about polar bears. These cuddly but ferocious animals have been immortalized with a place on our toonie and continue to be a symbol of our national identity. Sadly, these national treasures are facing serious challenges due to increased ice melt brought on by warming climate trends.

This country is home to approximately 16,000 polar bears, representing 75% of the population worldwide, with approximately 10% of those living in the Hudson's Bay area. Polar bears are found in high densities along the Ontario coast, from Hudson's Bay and the western coast of James Bay north of Attawapiskat, during the ice-free season, typically between mid-July and November. They currently have no federal legislative protection, but are listed as threatened, as a species at risk in Ontario. In fact, Mr. Ian Stirling, one of the world's most esteemed polar bear experts, has claimed that by the middle of the century, we'll be likely to have lost two thirds of the world's polar bears.

Polar bears are at the top of the food chain, and therefore play an important role in the overall health of the marine environment and are considered important indicator species because they rely on sea ice for their food. Here's where the trouble lies: According to satellite images, the ice in the Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions has been disappearing at a rate of 10% per decade since 1979. The polar bears living in Hudson's Bay are at their most southern range and therefore at the highest risk of impact from a warming impact. In fact, it's strongly believed by many experts that warmer weather will likely make it impossible for the polar bears to survive on the shores of Hudson's Bay within 20 to 30 years.

It's not hard to see why this is such an important issue that this House needs to be aware of. While polar bears live on land during part of the year, they carry out many key functions, such as feeding and mating, on the sea ice. A warming planet means less ice coverage of the Arctic sea, leaving the bears with less time and less ice.

For example, the open water season in Hudson's Bay, the time in which bears are unable to survive on the ice, has increased by about three weeks since 1996. The time bears have on the ice is their best season, when they hunt for seals, fish and other prey. It gives bears the opportunity to restore their body fat and their fitness. But this vital period for storing energy for the warm season, when the ice is less and there's less food available, is becoming more and more limited on account of climate change.

This is particularly serious for polar bears that are pregnant or nursing young, and for the cubs themselves. In Hudson's Bay, scientists have found the main cause of death in cubs to be either their lack of food or lack of fat on nursing mothers.

Maternal denning sites, spring feeding areas and fall staging areas are the three most critical components of polar bear habitat. Spring feeding occurs on the sea ice, whereas denning sites and staging areas occur on land.

Climate change has resulted in the loss of sea ice habitat and maternal denning habitat, having the greatest impact on the survival of cubs and older bears. Additionally, these changes have led to an increase in the number of encounters polar bears have with humans—encounters that threaten the safety of both parties.

A recent research paper published by the National Research Council Research Press looked closely at this issue and served to further clarify its importance. I'd just like to quickly go over some of the findings.

If you'll recall, Hudson Bay undergoes a complete cryogenic cycle each year. It is entirely covered by ice by late December in most years, but the ice melts in summer, so there is a four- to five-month ice-free period in summer and fall. During the ice-free period, all bears are forced ashore, where they remain until ice forms again in late fall or early winter. While on land, polar bears generally survive on stored reserves acquired from hunting seals on the ice.

This study found that the net result of increased ice melts in the Hudson Bay and James Bay regions was that polar bears were forced to spend about 30 days longer on land in 2012 than bears did in 1980. That's 30 days they can't spend on the ice carrying out the functions necessary to their survival. It is no surprise, then, that earlier breakup is implicated in declines in body condition, survival and abundance of polar bears.

This is similar to earlier estimates of advances in breakup of three to four weeks in the western half of Hudson Bay between 1971 and 2003. A similar trend of earlier breakup and later freeze-up was documented in the northern regions of Hudson Bay, Foxe Basin and Hudson Strait. Simply put, polar bears are running out of livable ice in Ontario. Our polar bears are under threat, Madam Speaker. This is clearly evident in the role that polar bears play in our national identity. Greater awareness needs to be brought to the matter.

I'm speaking fast, Madam Speaker, trying to get my whole speech in.

However, what we need to keep in mind is that the problem of increased ice melts is merely a single representation of a larger threat facing Ontario ecosystems. These threats are significant, and it's crucial that we in the Legislature be keenly aware of the destructive impacts of climate change in these critical regions.

In the last three and a half minutes that I have, Madam Speaker, I want to talk briefly about the boreal forest. The boreal forest and lowlands of northern Ontario comprise the most intact boreal forest in the world, covering an area roughly the size of France. This ecosystem includes the Hudson Bay lowland, which is one of the most expansive wetlands in the world.

According to various studies, recent global warming trends have negatively impacted the growth and survival of boreal tree species and have increased the frequency of costly wildfires and more severe pest-related damage. There is also evidence of the direct effects of climate change, such as increased temperature stress, drought stress and freeze/thaw damage. It is an ecosystem that has experienced increased fire frequency and pest damage.

There is also increasing evidence of a systemic change in boreal wildlife that is consistent with a climate change signal, including shifts in species range and behaviours. Some of the boreal forest's most beloved songbirds have faced steep population declines over the past 40 years, including the Canada warbler, which has had a 75% decline; the evening grosbeak, which has had a 75% decline; the rusty blackbird, which has had a 90% decline; and the olive-sided flycatcher, which has had a 70%-plus decline.

Since the 1850s, the mean annual temperature in the boreal forest regions of Canada has risen from 0.5 degrees Celsius to 3 degrees Celsius, with increases of greater than 2 degrees Celsius west of the Ontario-Manitoba border. The intergovernmental panel on climate change recently published its fifth assessment report, and concluded that increases of 2 degrees Celsius in mean annual temperature by 2050 are highly probable, and the mean annual temperature across the Canadian boreal zone could be 4 to 5 degrees warmer by the year 2100.

Warmer temperatures, coupled with changes in the distribution and timing of annual precipitation, are likely to cause serious tree-killing droughts. Climate change has already begun affecting the boreal zone, with projections indicating that the northern portions will be hit harder than further south.

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I could go on, Speaker, but suffice it to say that the Hudson Bay and James Bay ecosystems are at huge risk from what climate change threatens. The increased ice melt brought on by changing climate trends in the Hudson Bay and James Bay region threaten the existence of one of our most beloved animals and represents a much larger concern of ecological damage in those regions. It's a serious issue that will carry significant consequences for our province.

That's why I'm putting this motion forward today. I wanted to also mention that other speakers will be speaking on other parts of this motion. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Madam Speaker, may I say you look great in that chair? Congratulations.

It's a pleasure to join the debate today with regard to motion 68. I think it's safe to say that everyone in this House agrees that climate change is a serious concern

that we all must be cognizant and thoughtful about. To the member opposite, I want to say that I appreciate your concern.

In the early 2000s, my sister and brother-in-law lived in a community on the north tip of Hudson Bay. It was formerly called Repulse Bay; it has now returned to his original Inuit name. I recall that we went up to visit them on the May 24 weekend one year. There was concern because the polar bears were coming close to the community. They had to go and deal with the threat accordingly. The only reason that particular bear was coming close to the community was that it was looking for a new food source.

So I do appreciate what you're saying, and I want to really stress the fact that the PC Party of Ontario remains committed to tackling climate change in a fashion that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting taxpayers and our economy.

When we talk about what we're facing around the Arctic Circle—again, the community that Lana and Michael lived in had the Arctic Circle run right through it. It was pretty cool to be up there.

I just want to share with everyone here in the House today that the Ontario and federal governments have already invested significant time and resources to address this issue. For instance, the Canadian Ice Service produces daily updates on Artic ice levels and releases seasonal summaries describing ice conditions in the north. Yes, Speaker, this service includes several detailed maps of the ice conditions in southern Hudson Bay, the region immediately above northern Ontario.

People in the House today might also be interested to learn that this same service provides an annual ice atlas, which offers year-to-year comparisons about ice levels in Canada and Ontario.

We don't want to get stalled and use a lot of time on a motion when we have yet to develop an effective response to climate change. But don't get me wrong; we all know that we have to get this issue right, and, to the member, we are sensitive to and cognizant of that.

In terms of getting it right, I don't feel that it will put us on the right path if we pursue the cap-and-trade scheme that the Liberal government has introduced. As you know, the Ontario PCs are flatly against the cap-and-trade slush fund.

I was just touring a business on Carlingview Drive, and even they are worried that cap-and-trade in Ontario will increase the cost of living and doing business in Ontario.

As I said, it's not just our party who is against cap-and-trade; so is the Ontario public. Last month, a Forum Research poll in the Toronto Star revealed that 59% of Ontarians disapproved of cap-and-trade altogether, and 68% disapproved of the rise in prices associated with cap-and-trade.

While we're amicable to this motion, and I applaud the member for coming forward with it, we really need to be cognizant that in the larger picture, when it comes to addressing climate change, we do not handcuff Ontarians with a costly scheme that will impact business as well as households. My fellow colleagues will pick up from there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I'm glad to have an opportunity to add my voice to what it means to face climate change in northern Ontario.

The member had focused on some of the big animals that live in northern Ontario, and I agree with him that some of the animals are having a tough time adapting to climate change. I will add to this that there are people who live in northern Ontario, and we are also having a very tough time. There are businesses that set up shop and are trying to thrive, and they are also having a tough time.

I would look a bit at the record. We have known that climate change has been coming for quite some time. I was here in 2007, when the government directed an Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation to advise on how to minimize the negative impact of climate change. The expert panel produced its report in November 2009 with 59 recommendations and a call for prompt and vigorous action. Unfortunately, not much has been done.

It was followed in 2011 by the Ontario government's release of Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014. That plan outlined the government's action over four years—that is, to 2014—with five broad goals and 35 specific actions, but nothing was done, Speaker. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario expressed caution: How come there are no timelines? How come there's no funding? How come there are no accountability provisions in all of that?

In a subsequent report from the Environmental Commissioner, he reported frustration with the government's retreat from the responsibilities it had assigned itself on climate readiness.

Then in 2013, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's report was titled Failing Our Future. He said that "the government's long-term energy policy could wipe out some of the gains that have been made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions," adding, "There has been little progress to report this year."

In 2014, the Environmental Commissioner's report came with a headline of "Ontario Is Failing in Fight Against Climate Change."

Despite the lack of action, the members continued to focus on awareness. I think it was quite telling that on March 12, 2015, about a year ago and a bit, a member from this House, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, motioned to recognize that climate change exists and poses a threat to Ontario's environment, businesses, communities and economy. It passed unanimously, but not without some questions. I think the member from Toronto–Danforth said it best when he asked why it was that we had to vote on whether or not we believed the earth is round. We've passed this, Speaker. We're way past this.

By the end of 2015, the government released its climate change strategy. That was a 40-page report, in-

cluding a lot of pictures and cover pages, with few targets, no timelines and no details—very much like the 2011 document. But it does say that it promises a "climate-resilient" Ontario by 2030. On page 36 of that latest report, where one might hope to come up with an action plan, you see only a title page that says, "The Action Plan to Come." We're still waiting with bated breath a year later, and the action plan has not come.

The government's recent Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, pretty well does the same thing: no provision for climate change adaptation.

I started my remarks by saying that, yes, there are big, beautiful animals that live in northern Ontario. The polar bear is one. There are many others. But there are also people, and a lot of the people who live in the far north of Ontario are First Nations.

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I had the opportunity to talk with Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day. Chief Day and I were both stuck at the airport on Monday, not able to fly because of inclement weather, and basically we started to talk about the environment. He shared with me his frustration as to how climate change is having a real effect on the people who he represents, on the First Nations who live in the far north of Ontario, but nobody has come to talk to them. Nobody has opened up a dialogue that says, "What do you think the action plan should look like so that we prepare the people of the north and the beautiful creatures that live there for what is coming?" Nobody has ever come to ask.

Believe me, when it comes to knowing Mother Nature, when it comes knowing Mother Earth, when it comes to protecting our environment, you can't beat the First Nations. When they make a decision, they make a decision for what that will mean for the next seven generations. They have spent a lot of time looking at their environment. They have intimate knowledge of the changes that are presently happening to their environment. They have ideas as to how we can make sure that those changes are mitigated if they need to be, or adapted to so that people, animals, polar bears and everybody else can thrive. But nobody ever comes to talk to them. Nobody ever asks them for their input. Nobody wants to hear the good ideas that they have.

I know that I have to leave time on the clock for my colleagues; I will say thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. May I say again that it is really great to see you in the chair. I think you're having a calming effect on this place. It's been quite good this afternoon.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this motion forward. It is an important motion. As we read the motion, it talks about raising awareness about increased levels of ice melting in Hudson Bay and James Bay. That's exactly what it says: increased awareness, and not just increased awareness of the kind of effects that it's having in northern Ontario, which are incredibly important to this province and to the people who live there. I take to heart the comments from the member for Nickel Belt with regard to First Nations and their ability to think generations ahead of time. We could have done a better job of that ourselves, and I think that's what this motion speaks to.

I'm glad that the member mentioned the boreal forests. The boreal forests are part of this planet's lungs. This planet needs the boreal forest to breathe, so having the effects that we have on that not only affects people in the north, but it affects people in the south as well, and around this province and around this globe. Increasing that awareness and increasing the awareness about what effects we're having on the vegetation, the animal life and, most importantly, the human life that exists in the north is how we as individuals and as communities treat the issue of climate change.

What do we do in our everyday lives in terms of reducing our use of carbon fuels and reducing our carbon footprint? As you know, our government is putting a price on carbon. That's an important thing to do. I know it's not supported by the members opposite. I do want to remind the member opposite, from Huron–Bruce, that when we closed the coal plants in this province, that was the biggest single carbon reduction anywhere. When it was going full tilt, coal plants in this province had a bigger carbon footprint than all of the oil and gas industry in Alberta. That was a tremendous change, and that wasn't supported.

I think that it's important that we support this member's motion, Madam Speaker, because I think that we can do a lot more to educate ourselves inside this Legislature, but also, it's important for us to create awareness. We discuss these issues every day inside here. Sometimes we make the assumption that socially, everything that we discuss in here is prevalent outside of here, but people only have so much time in their busy everyday lives to take in so much information. Raising the awareness of the kinds of impacts they're having in northern Ontario—in Hudson Bay and James Bay—I think will be very important in terms of changing people's behaviour and carbon footprint.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new role. I can already see you're having an impact on keeping the level down here. We might have to look at extending those hours a little bit. We'll see.

It's a privilege to get up on behalf of my residents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to comment on motion 68, climate change and ice levels. It is an important issue and something we must look at. I don't think anybody in this House disagrees with that. Climate change is real, but we need to work on a practical and well-thought-out approach to mitigate and solve what has been referred to as a very serious threat to our way of life.

There are many solutions, but meaningful results can only be achieved collectively. We can't do it alone. Ontario could and should be a leader who should work for our partners and our neighbours to the south. Ontario's carbon footprint is one tenth of 1% of the world's carbon footprint. If we embark, essentially on our own, on a foolhardy plan, we'll be bankrupt a long time before an impact is made.

Let us be clear: The Liberal cap-and-trade is just another tax grab. It's not the silver bullet that everybody is professing. The government is out of money and this is their latest scheme to refuel their spending addiction, mismanagement and waste. Speaker, they've done a yeoman's job at it: They've raised taxes and transfers that they collect by more than 100%—$65 billion to over $130 billion—and still, they doubled the debt. It's the largest subnational debt in the world—number one—and there are some able competitors around the world.

And waste: We have eHealth, gas plant scandals, smart meters, Ornge and more. We need to make an issue and make sure that people are aware of climate change, but it should not be an issue just to change the channel. I see this as a way of changing the channel away from the latest scandal we see in this House where we have discretionary funds being used that seem to reward people who make large contributions to this government. There's little wonder why people mistrust this government. They see it over and over again.

Again, I see another report in the Globe and Mail about a secret document talking about the same issue with large companies getting large amounts of government money. It just so happens—people would draw their own lines—they're large contributors to this party. It's little wonder that people are really wondering why we would want to change the channel.

Speaker, there are legitimate fears about the cost to the consumers. Ontarians will have to pay nearly $900 more a year on gas and home heating. Small manufacturers will be hit with $170,000 in new energy costs every year. This will put jobs at risk, shut down our investments in our province and increase the cost of gas, groceries and home heating for families.

I see these families in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry every day, who are having trouble paying the bills. This will only make it worse. We cannot take this issue lightly. We have to get it right and we have to be part of the big picture if we're going to have any real success. We need sensible solutions that don't just create another Liberal slush fund.

The current budget shows the Liberal cap-and-trade scheme will raise another $1.9 billion in new revenues from selling carbon credits to businesses and big emitters. That's $600 million more than the Liberals claimed in their fall economic statement. It's about making this government look good and not about results. The approach will end up manipulating the deficit and surplus figures, giving the Liberals a political advantage. The money will not be able to be looked at by our Financial Accountability Officer, something else that was planned by this government and something that we see as an issue.

I know that other members want to speak to this bill. I think we have to be careful. Climate change is an issue, but we need to look at the problems in this House.

1500

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations.

It's once again an honour to be able to stand in the House and today comment on the bill from the member from Scarborough Southwest—the motion on the impact of climate change on the Hudson's Bay region. I have no doubt that the member is sincere, and I would like to thank him for bringing this motion forward.

In my riding, I have the Arctic watershed. If you go up Highway 11, you'll see a big monument: "From here, all water flows north," into James Bay and Hudson Bay. As a farmer who farmed my whole life in northern Ontario, I have no doubt about climate change. Farming in northern Ontario actually benefits from climate change. I'm not here to discount climate change, but the issue that we have to face with climate change is a very serious issue, and it's an issue that has been faced by First Nations for generations—that our modern society has passed the First Nations by because, quite frankly, they didn't fit into what our modern society was.

As our modern society cut down the Carolinian forest and cleared all the land down here and built skyscrapers, roads and all that stuff, the people from northern Ontario dug the mines and did all those things to build this modern society. The people in northern Ontario, who are also being impacted by climate change—farmers are going to benefit, but the others aren't. They are now also being bypassed by our modern society, which has realized that all this modern stuff we built impacts the climate. Climate change has been happening—it's not a new thing. Where my farm is used to be a glacial lake, so there has been climate change before, but our society has sped it up, right?

What about the people who are being passed by? As we do things to lessen our impact on the planet—which is great—we have to make that the people who don't live in the major centres, the people who don't quite fit anymore, are not the victims of climate change. The victims are the people who can't pay the bills because hydro is more expensive because—there are a few other things we would disagree with, but closing the coal plants is good thing, and it made electricity more expensive. But not everyone can pay that cost.

Last week in my riding, it was minus 30 degrees; today, 30 centimetres of snow fell. Climate change might be happening, but those people are still paying the bills, and a lot of them did the hard work and now are on pension, but the pension is not keeping up. They are victims because—again, with the increased tax on gasoline for the carbon offsets. We may agree or disagree, but some of those people who pay for the gasoline

have no choice. There is not going to be a subway. In northern Ontario, our bus routes are being cut. The people who could use the train to get here for medical appointments—it doesn't exist anymore. We hear, "We're going to build more transit." We're losing ours because we're losing our people. We are victims.

The people in outlying regions, the people who actually live in the boreal forest, as I do—we're the lungs of the province, the lungs of the world, but we shouldn't have to pay a penalty because we live in the lungs of the world. Our society has to make sure that everyone pays a fair share and that everyone benefits from the changes in climate. I think that's one we have to remember. Climate change is happening. We all recognize it. We've got to make sure that the solution which might be good for society as a whole doesn't leave a bunch of outliers who suffer, as the First Nations have suffered for generations because of our prosperity. This could very well be happening to the people of rural and northern Ontario as we speak, and that's something we have to be very careful of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: This motion is very important, and I thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this motion forward.

As we know, the more attention that is focused on an issue, the more chance people will understand and get on board with measures to improve the situation, such as the cap-and-trade program.

As an educator, I can tell you that the issue of climate change is dealt with many times a day in classrooms all across Ontario, whether it's incidentally or in the Ontario curriculum. There are wonderful books that help students understand the urgency and importance of this issue.

The MPP from Scarborough Southwest pointed out that skeptics of the underlying evidence are now thankfully few and far between. But unfortunately, some still exist. I know that the opposition party just recently made a decision to support climate change, and I hope they'll get on board with the cap-and-trade issue.

This motion will once again highlight to adults—who are in constant need of reminders—the problems of climate change. Children in the schools know and can speak very wisely about these effects.

Climate change affects many natural resources. When lakes freeze and thaw, when the trees bud in spring—hopefully there weren't enough buds out on the trees last week, when we had our terrible ice storm. It affects crops, and it affects the beauty we see in spring as well.

Changing temperatures and precipitation cause extreme events that affect water resources. As climate changes, some species will adapt by migrating to new locations. I think we have a lot more Lyme disease in this area than we used to, because the bug has moved closer, where it can now live.

We have changing breeding seasons, and we have species seeking new food sources, throwing the food chain out of whack. Less adaptable species may even disappear from their current habitats.

The way certain species interact with one another and their environment may change. Less ice coverage and changes to lake freeze-up and breakup times may affect food supplies for aquatic species and may also affect fish spawning.

Changes in water and air temperature may make conditions more favourable for diseases and invasive species, which puts pressure on native species.

Mild, shorter winters, which we thought we were having, lead to changing rainfall patterns. Changes in the water's movement between air, soil, plants and bodies of water occur.

More extreme weather like we witnessed a few years ago in places like Burlington—it had never seen flooding before, and it had a lot of flooding.

There's also erosion, shoreline damage, infrastructure failures and decreased water quality due to increased runoff and debris.

Most aquatic species' growth and reproduction are strongly influenced by water temperatures. Higher temperatures in the Great Lakes and inland lakes could result in fewer cold-water species in Ontario, such as lake trout, yellow perch and large-mouth bass, which my colleague from Trinity–Spadina likes to catch in Little Lake in Barrie. At-risk fish species such as the lake sturgeon may disappear completely from Ontario.

Some wildlife species may be forced to move further north to a more favourable habitat. Climate change may affect wildlife reproduction, relationships between predators and prey, survival of species, rates of disease in wildlife species and the availability of food and habitat.

I urge everyone to pass this motion. I believe that the more attention we bring to this subject, the more support and action will take place. I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to be a little more controversial, because you've have had a pretty easy go of it here on your first day. I'm not certain you've even had to admonish anybody. Quite a few of the NDP are sitting there quietly. I'm going to try to get them going a little bit too.

1510

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Yak's not here.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exactly.

It's a pleasure to rise and bring some thought to motion 68, on climate change and ice levels. Climate change is real. We have to invent our way out of it. We need to be innovative and creative, and there are solutions. But the Liberals' cap-and-trade is not the silver bullet that they're professing it to be.

There are legitimate fears by consumers. I have people in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—the farm community especially, and small businesses, and people on very fixed incomes—who are worried. Ontarians will have to pay nearly $900 more a year on gas and home heating. Small manufacturers will be hit with $170,000 in new energy costs every year.

We need sensible solutions, not Liberal slush funds. Cap-and-trade was projected to raise $1.9 billion a year in new revenues from selling carbon credits to business and big emitters. That's $600 million more than what they originally claimed in their fall economic statement. I am hopeful that they are not seeing this as just a cash cow to be able to fill their coffers and make up for many mistakes and the mismanagement that we have suffered over the last 13 years.

This approach, Madam Speaker, will end up manipulating the deficit and surplus figures to the Liberals' political advantage. The money will go to the Liberal government's consolidated revenue fund, from which they will pay for all their programs, not necessarily isolated to just environmental concerns. This increased revenue will not be put into a dedicated account that we can guarantee that they will actually combat climate change—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: —which they continue to say.

The Financial Accountability Officer—don't just listen to me and our party and the members of the third party, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We're not going to have crosstalk over here, okay? I'll just remind the member from Beaches–East York and the Chair of Cabinet that we're not going to have crosstalk.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hopefully they are listening closely to this, because maybe they can have some thought process afterwards and step up and speak up.

The Financial Accountability Officer, Stephen LeClair—so it's not just Bill Walker and it's not just the parties opposite—said this scheme "could mean an increase in government debt unless the projects are already included in the calculation of government borrowing requirements or are associated with already planned spending." LeClair said the cap-and-trade proceeds will be put in the province's general revenue pot and show up on the books in the same way as do taxes or federal transfer money.

I'm not certain, if you were really sincere that you want do this, why you wouldn't have set up an absolutely separate account where we can track every single dollar in and every single dollar out. We're into a bit of fundraising challenge and scandal, Madam Speaker, and I don't think we want to go there with the environment as well. The environment is very important to all of us, going forward.

The financial accountability watchdog won't even be privy to the details of the fiscal impacts, so that's somewhat—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I am going to say one more time to the member from Bruce–Grey-Owen Sound that you need to speak to the motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am speaking to the motion, Madam Speaker.

The Financial Accountability—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I am going to remind the member that you cannot challenge the Speaker. Okay? So you need to speak to the motion. Either we are going to do that and follow the rules, or we are going to move to the next speaker. Now wrap up.

Mr. Bill Walker: Madam Speaker, I would never challenge you. I was more reiterating that I was speaking to the bill and was trying to bring up very salient points, particularly—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the third party has more time.

M^me^ France Gélinas: No, we're done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No more? Okay.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my friend—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madam Speaker, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, did I—oh, my God! Bad, sexist minister. Terrible. Excuse me, Madam Speaker. I've always been a little gender-dyslexic—excuse me. I'm going to get myself in more trouble, so I'll just shut up right now.

Anyway, back to something that I feel a little safer talking about: the Arctic. I'll just ice those last comments I made.

I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest. I do want to talk about it, because why would you pick, of all the geography in the world, this particular place? The member shows great perception and understanding of this. I think that it's a very brilliant thing to do.

What do we know about our Arctic? It's already 2.7 degrees, almost three degrees, Celsius warmer. Why should we care? That doesn't sound like very much—unless it's that your children's body temperature went up that much; then you're rushing them to hospital. Small incremental changes in temperature can have catastrophic effects.

What is happening in Ontario as a result of the Arctic warming at that rate? In my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane's part of the province, over the next 30 years, that land will be eight degrees Celsius warmer than it was. Every one degree Celsius increase in temperature means that 7% more water is absorbed into the atmosphere.

As a farmer, which he's had a lifetime of, and his neighbours, you just think about that change in the hydrological cycle; all that water in the fields in the fall in large volumes, severalfold what's there right now—how hard is it to get crops out of the ground? If you think about a warmer Arctic as some bonanza for food, it may be in the near term, but not for very long. What do we know about this destabilized warmer Arctic? Does it mean we're always going to be warmer? I remember when 2014 came around and it was so cold on the Prairies that it went down to three or four metres of deep freeze, almost permafrost, that broke up the sewage and

water systems there. Then a year and a half later, it was so hot and so dry that the Prairies were on fire and you had air quality warnings—very destructive to agriculture.

But the problem is false springs. What happens is, just as we lost 80% of our apple crop in 2012, which was an anomaly that will now become a regularity, it got warm and then it got cold, and the blossoms died. The same thing happened last year in BC, where grapes and strawberries came out in January and they all died. Then in May and June, which is what most of us call summer or late spring, Halifax had four or five metres of snow, as did St. John's. That was the biggest damage to the agriculture and transportation economies in Atlantic Canada and loss of GDP.

What we're doing is we're losing our ability to grow food. It isn't just temperate; our sycamore trees in the Rouge Valley and Pelee Island don't bloom anymore because they come out early as part of the Carolinian forest, and when it gets cold, the buds die. So you don't have pollination and you don't have germination.

Madam Speaker, where does our food come from? Eighty per cent of our vegetables come from California, if you're an American or a Canadian. They're in a 40-year severe drought: no water from rivers, no more rain and their aquifers are being drained. This is all the result of changes in the Arctic from behaviours of people like us.

I commend the member for pointing this out. Hopefully, this teaching moment will help us to be motivated to greater unity on climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Scarborough Southwest for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to thank all members who spoke on this bill, from Huron–Bruce, Nickel Belt, Ottawa, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Barrie, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

It's a huge issue that's in front of us. The good thing about these private members' bills or motions is that you get to learn something. When I brought this forward today, I had no idea—the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about being a farmer and the changes he's experiencing. That's really a big issue that should be tackled on some other day in some other location, maybe, or in another session.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke about the seven generations. It's so important to think that way. I had some dealings with the aboriginal communities that came to Scarborough because there's a big burial mound in Scarborough that was discovered in 1961. As they were developing that area, they found this huge native burial ground. It's still there, and it has been commemorated many times.

Other members have talked about various parts of this issue as well. Mine was to focus on one area mostly, the polar bear, but I learned a lot here today. At some point in time in the future, I'm sure the ministry or someone will bring forward something with regard to polar bears. As I mentioned during my two minutes' time, Madam Speaker, they are being threatened. They may be one example and may be more popular because our culture looks at them in a different way, but the climate change issue in general is affecting us very quickly and in so many different ways, ways that I didn't even know today, which were mentioned by opposition members. Even the member from Barrie brought up some good things regarding some other species that are being affected by climate change.

Again, thank you very much for this discussion, and hopefully it will lead to a further discussion in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll deal with this item at the end of this session.

I'm going to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

1520

VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order, Speaker: Before we proceed, we have so many new people coming in, I'd like to make an introduction of some, if I could.

Caleb Ellis and Kelly Semkiw are here from MySafeWork and their Jersey of Courage campaign; Lisa Bastien, Mooge Dae Cox and Meti Kouhstani are here from the Canadian Labour Congress; we have Vern Edwards from the Ontario Federation of Labour; Vena Sharma is here from Unifor; Karl Crevar is here from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers; and we have representatives from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Power Workers' Union, the Society of Energy Professionals, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers, and Workers United. Speaker, with your indulgence, a shout-out to two classes of 40 Unifor health and safety activists and reps watching Queen's Park live from Port Elgin this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Just a reminder to members: If you are going to introduce guests, you should be putting it into your time that has been allocated, but I'll do this as an exception.

WORKERS DAY OF MOURNING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE DEUIL POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Hatfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning / Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant un Jour de deuil pour les travailleurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We in this Legislature observe the 28th day of April as Workers Day of Mourning, and we've done that since 1988. The purpose of this bill is to

standardize the way we in Ontario acknowledge the significance of the 28th of April. With this bill, we intend to increase the public's awareness of the Workers Day of Mourning. We intend to promote workplace safety, and we want to see more respect paid to injured workers.

We lower the flags on the Workers Day of Mourning as a sign of respect for the men and women who have been injured on the job.

We lower the flags for the men and women who became diseased because of the conditions they had to put up with at work.

We lower the flags to honour the memory of those who were killed while earning a living.

We lower the flags to show solidarity with the families they left behind.

We lower flags to validate and reinforce that those lives had real meaning and won't ever be forgotten.

We lower the flags here at the Legislature, and we lower flags at our provincial buildings, including the Ministry of Labour and WSIB offices.

The lowered flag is a powerful symbol of our respect for the day of mourning, our shared loss and our commitment to workers' safety. It shows we care, and it demonstrates that we care for their surviving family members as well. Lowering the flag is a sign of dignity, a symbol of respect and a call for justice.

We've done that here; however, sometimes it's been hit-and-miss elsewhere. For example, some school boards may agree to lower the flag at the board office, but they won't do it at all the schools within their jurisdiction—there are nearly 5,000 elementary and high schools throughout Ontario. Some municipalities will do it; some don't. I'm told it's the same at hospitals and college and university campuses. It's an inconsistent approach.

This has to change. That is the purpose of this proposed legislation. This bill will make the public, especially our younger citizens, more aware of the Workers Day of Mourning. It should send a message to employers that they have to do more to train their employees and secure and maintain a safe place to work.

The Ministry of Labour is the first to acknowledge that workers new to a job are three times more likely to be injured during their first month at work than more experienced employees. One horrific example in Oakville, at a bakery: Eighteen-year-old David Ellis, on his second day on the job—no training, no supervision—was left alone on the shop floor. He was cleaning an industrial mixer, a mixer that had been previously designated as faulty by ministry inspectors, a mixer on which the bakery failed to install a low-cost safety device, a mixer that was accidently activated, and David Ellis was sucked in head-first and killed on his second day at work. That was 17 years ago, Madam Speaker, and we still have young people dying on the job in Ontario every year since.

Caleb and Kelly, members of David's family, came to Queen's Park this morning. They're here this afternoon to support this bill and to continue their ongoing campaign for safer workplaces in our province, with their Jersey of Courage campaign. Thank you very much.

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I recall an accident down my way, in Tilbury—the second day on the job for Jared Dietrich. He was 19. He died when he got caught in the conveyor belt of a foam-recycling machine. That was in 1999. The company was fined $40,000—$40,000 for the death of a 19-year-old young man just starting out in the Ontario workforce.

Speaker, 30 young people in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 died in work-related accidents between 2009 and 2013. During that same time period, more than 30,000 young people received injuries resulting in lost time at work.

When a serious injury or a death occurs on the job site, ministry investigators are called in, charges are laid and the case makes its way through the legal system, which usually takes a year or two but sometimes a lot longer.

In 2009, you may recall that on Christmas Eve, four men fell 13 storeys to their deaths from what is known as a swing stage at a Toronto high-rise. Originally, the company was fined $200,000. The appeals court boosted that fine to $750,000, and this past January the manager of that construction project was sentenced to three and a half years in jail. He's appealing his sentence.

"Kill a Worker, Go to Jail"—that message was launched by former OFL leaders Sid Ryan and Nancy Hutchison, and that's still the message today from Chris Buckley, the new president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

We realize that no time behind bars or no financial penalty can bring back a worker who was killed on the job. No jail time can undo the pain inflicted on the families of the men and women who are killed while at work in Ontario, but it sends a powerful message to other employers to clean up their act and make on-the-job health and safety training and supervision more of a priority.

Following that Toronto high-rise accident, Speaker, an expert panel made a number of recommendations. One of them included increased health and safety curriculum in our high schools. Lowering the flags at high schools would be a meaningful teaching tool for what recommendation.

There are something like 200,000 new claims a year opened at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the WSIB.

Injured workers in this province shouldn't be treated as criminals or people trying to scam the system, yet many of them tell me that's exactly how they are made to feel when dealing with the WSIB.

Dignity, respect, justice—three small words with great significance. Injured workers deserve dignity, respect and justice from the WSIB.

We have nearly 500 new claims a day for occupational injury or illness; 54,000 lost-time injury claims came in last year, and another 126,000 injury cases were reported which didn't end up with time lost.

Health and safety is a critical issue. Last year, ministry inspectors issued 131,197 orders for non-compliance. Last year, the ministry levied fines totalling $9,365,870. Employers need to step up. Our public institutions need to do their part to highlight unsafe work in Ontario and the struggle to make things better. In the construction industry alone, an average of 20 workers are killed every year in Ontario. Between 1998 and 2015, 359 workers were killed on construction sites in Ontario. One is too many.

1530

How do we get workplace safety to be more of a priority? Well, for one thing, we make the Workers Day of Mourning more of a priority. We make more people in our communities aware of the enormity of the injuries and the deaths workers face every day on the job. We strip away any complacency. We say to those who have neglected to lower their flags: "You are funded by provincial money. You will join us in honouring the Workers Day of Mourning. It's the right thing to do."

Together, we can make Ontario workplaces more safe for each and every one of us, our sons, our daughters and our grandchildren. We owe it to them so they can go to work and receive the training they need for the job they do and come back home safe and sound each and every day after work.

My hat goes off to the men and women who hold the annual ceremonies in their communities in observance of the Workers Day of Mourning on the 28th day of April. In Windsor, Rolly Marentette and Tracie Edward have done it for our district labour council. We have surviving family members who attend every year, so we don't forget people such as Cindy Libby, Claudio Cardoso, Johnny Hunt and Elie Seremach, just to name a few.

Speaker, we had eight workplace fatalities in Windsor and Essex county in 2014. One is bad enough; eight in one year in our small community is outrageous.

I want to thank Vern Edwards, the OFL's director of health and safety, for the work he does on the importance of April 28; and OFL director Laurie Hardwick, who is a strong advocate for injured workers.

Day in and day out, we leave home to earn a living to put food on the table, to keep a roof over our heads and to provide for our families, yet not all of us return healthy, and some of us never return at all. We all have the right to come home from work safe and unharmed in any way.

Asbestos and other occupational hazards will be the theme of this year's annual ceremony in many communities. As a reporter, I remember well the stories we did at CBC Windsor on people such as Tommy Dunn. Tommy worked at Bendix Automotive making brake shoes. He died of mesothelioma. He was 35. His widow, Lucy, comes to our day of mourning ceremony every year. Lucy has also lost a brother, a brother-in-law, a sister-in-law and an uncle to workplace hazards.

We have to do more to make workplace safety much more of a priority. We need more inspectors, more enforcement, better training, tougher sentences, and we need more compassion for the injured workers in this province.

I know I'm running out of time, Speaker. I just want to say that, yes, lowering the flags is a symbolic gesture, but it's the least our publicly funded institutions can do to increase recognition of workplace fatalities, injuries and occupational diseases. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I turn to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Certainly, there are an awful lot of people on this side of the House who would like to talk to this important issue, so we're going to be sharing our time amongst ourselves. I don't want the member to think that the brevity of my remarks, which will be about three minutes, is any indication as to the seriousness, or the admiration I have for him for bringing forward this very, very important issue.

It's an issue I hope will meet with the pleasure of all members around this House, because we're joined today by some people who have some lived experience in this regard. I know that Caleb Ellis is here. Certainly, I've gotten to know Caleb's dad, Rob, and his sister Jessica, as a result of the work that they do to educate young people about what can really happen when an industrial accident takes place or an accident at work takes place.

I know we're joined by some folks from the injured workers' groups who do a wonderful job on a daily basis ensuring that politicians and the rest of the people, including businesses, unions and organized labour—everybody—understand the importance of this issue and how seriously we must treat it. I know we have SEIU up there and perhaps some of the other folks from the OFL, as well.

I think we're all here today because we agree, as the member said, that one death is too many. If you look at the progress that has taken place since 2003, we've been able to reduce the incidents in this province by about 40%. What's remained stubbornly high, though, is that the fatalities haven't dropped. The fatalities have plateaued—there's that straight line. Even though the number of jobs is going up and you could say in one regard maybe they are coming down, they're not coming down enough for me and they shouldn't be coming down enough for anybody in this House as well.

We are making some progress in the fact that since last April, we've been targeting places where a lot of the fatalities occur. Where people are killed most often on the job sites are falls from heights—people falling from as little as six feet, people falling off high-rise buildings, off projects like that. I can tell you, Speaker, that as a result of introducing mandatory—not voluntary, mandatory—falls-from-heights training, we have had 100,000 people since last April who have taken that training, not because they wanted to, but because this House told them they had to because we treat this issue with the seriousness that it deserves.

We're the only jurisdiction I am aware of in the world—and until I'm proven wrong, I'm going to keep

saying this—that has a Chief Prevention Officer; that has one person who acts on my behalf as Minister of Labour. That person's sole job is to prevent injuries in the province of Ontario. Other jurisdictions, I know, have looked at that and thought it's a good idea. I hope that they would follow suit. I think we should be proud that we've taken than road.

But, Speaker, I think what the member is doing today is bringing forward an expansion of an idea that started in this country a few years ago. We should recognize people who have been killed on the job and people who have been injured on the job, the same as we would mourn any other death, with the seriousness that it deserves.

When people go and serve their countries in different ways, the people who participate in the economy expect to come home at the end of the day. Too often, they don't. I think the idea that's being put forward by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh is an excellent way for this House to come together and ensure that people around this province have that symbol on the day of mourning, when those flags are lowered, and that we think about it at least for one day.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too will be sharing time with my colleagues, including our well-respected statesman and critic, Ted Arnott.

It's estimated that up to 90% of workplace deaths are preventable. Our PC caucus believes we must all work together to improve workplace safety, with the goal of preventing any death in the workplace.

I commend my friend and colleague Percy Hatfield, the MPP for Windsor–Tecumseh, for a very passionate and moving presentation. I think this is a very important matter. The day of mourning provides an opportunity to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace, and to show our support for their families. By recognizing April 28 as the Workers Day of Mourning, it will help raise awareness about the need to be more vigilant about workplace safety.

I was very proud this morning, at Percy's invitation, to be at a sign the Jersey of Courage campaign; Caleb and his sister Jessica are here in the crowd. Thank you very much. I'm thinking of you.

When I thought of speaking to this bill, it brought me back to my time at Bruce Power. I remember, every year there, participating in the day of mourning. A total of 11 workers were killed during the construction of the Bruce Power nuclear site many, many year ago. Those names are immortalized on the cairn outside the administration centre.

The annual gathering always includes members of the Grey-Bruce Labour Council, the Power Workers' Union, the Society of Energy Professionals, the building trades union, Ontario Power Generation, members of Saugeen First Nation and, of course, most importantly, family members of those who lost their lives during the construction of the Bruce site.

CEO Duncan Hawthorne always said, "Safety is our number one value at Bruce Power. That means every one of us has to care enough to act to ensure our workplace is safe for our colleagues."

That was the culture. That was the principle. But most importantly, that was what Duncan and all the people there ingrained. Everybody who came through the gates in the morning had to go home at night to their families and their loved ones. I can tell you, standing there, it was the most powerful and very impactful ceremony, to look at those families that had lost a loved one, to really make you stop in your tracks for at least a little bit of time and think, "What if that was me? What do I need to do?" It gave you the courage to act, regardless of what your skill was, what your job was. It was encouraging every employee and union partner to never forget the people who have died or become ill in the workplace, and to prevent it from happening again.

1540

I remember from my time there—and I think Percy is doing a great job of it, trying to bring this across our whole province and country, for that matter—that workplace safety is everybody's responsibility. Each person, in every work site, from the shop floor to the boardroom, in the Legislature, every single job: Take time. Take time to care enough to act. If you see something that could even slightly endanger one of your fellow workers, do the right thing. Step out and step up.

We all have the duty to ensure workplace safety. Percy, thank you again. I trust that you'll have unanimous support for this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: It's always a pleasure to talk about the workers. They are mourning specifically because it started in Sudbury, where I'm from. It basically started with an idea from Colin Lambert. Colin was a miner, like many other men in Sudbury. He was represented by the Steelworkers. He had this idea. So Sudbury was the first one. In 1984, we celebrated the first day of mourning in Sudbury, and we've been doing it for the last 32 years.

Applause.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Yes. Yes.

In 1985, it was recognized by the Canadian Labour Congress, and they basically made it official in 1985. They called it "Mourn for the dead and fight for the living." Then, in 1988—it's quite interesting because it was on April 7, same as today. It was right here in this House. The NDP was in opposition, and we brought forward this motion that recognized April 28 as the day of mourning for all of our province. At the time, we only asked that the buildings that belonged to the government of Ontario bring down their flags. What we're bringing today is making sure that many other institutions lower their flags.

You may wonder, Speaker: Why April 28? Well, it's quite simple. April 28 was chosen because this is the day, in 1914, when this Legislature in Ontario was the first

one to bring forward the Workmen's Compensation Act. We were the first ones to bring that forward, and we did that. The Legislative Assembly of the time did that on April 28.

Actually, I have a cut-out from the Toronto Star from 1914 that says, "Jubilation reigns in the Labor Temple today over the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act....

"The passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act will be a source of great satisfaction to the workers throughout the province."

It passed with unanimous support through a voice vote, and it was under a majority Conservative government that this particular piece of legislation happened. I just thought I would throw that in.

I'm really happy. In my riding, everybody lowers the flag. The day of mourning is a sacred day. I guarantee you, I will be there at the Fraser Auditorium this April 28, and I welcome everybody from Sudbury to join us to honour the dead and fight for the living.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and all those who have spoken towards this very important bill here this afternoon.

Bill 180, the Workers Day of Mourning Act, is a very important piece of legislation, and I'm very, very happy to say today that I am supporting it. Thanks again to the member for bringing this very important bill forward.

I will be the first to tell you that workers are the backbone of this province and that without them and the labour movement, we would not have many of the benefits that we now enjoy in this wonderful province of Ontario.

I have mentioned many times right here in this House that in my former life I was a mediator and most often worked with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, to settle cases between workers and employers, and in some cases families of deceased workers. It was extremely important to me that we came to a fair conclusion in matters that involved injured workers and their families.

Workers and those who have unions do important work in advocating for their own—because it is a daunting task for an individual to stand up to an employer, especially a large employer—to protect and ensure that workers can enjoy the rights they're entitled to.

Many of you in this House know that I also represented injured workers during my time with the Office of the Worker Adviser. I did that for two years, and it was one of the most rewarding experiences when I could win a case on behalf of an injured worker.

All too often, workers have settled for what the corporation they work for wants instead of what's right and what they're entitled to after working hard for that employer. It's especially tragic when workplace injuries or death occur, and I have dealt with many cases where that was the case.

As a former speaker said earlier, one death is one too many. Maybe those deaths aren't a consequence of negligence—we all have varying amounts of risk in our work—but it's important that we have an occasion to reflect, and that the occasion is observed as widely as possible, so that awareness of the importance of workers and their craft is recognized and that those who are killed on the job receive the thanks and recognition they so richly deserve.

I guess my time is up. Madam Speaker, I will be supporting this bill. Again, I would like to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm also pleased to rise and speak on Bill 180, the Workers Day of Mourning Act, which was brought forth by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

It's not just about deaths at the workplace. There are also injuries at the workplace. Unfortunately, a lot of times injuries do lead to death, and I think that, yes, we want to highlight the dangers of the workplace, but not just raise concerns about death. There are many, many injuries in the workplace.

We all recall that some workers fell from scaffolding just this year. I think there were criminal charges against the supervisor. When we hear deputations from first responders about post-traumatic stress disorder—how stressful was that for the people who saw them hanging on for dear life from that scaffolding for a while, before they fell to their deaths?

We could do lot more, I think, by teaching young kids, just like we did with drugs and smoking. I often rise here and talk about how we can get the message to adults through the kids, but we can also educate the kids. I don't recall too much being done when I was a student in school about workplace safety and how dangerous—and not to just assume that your co-workers or supervisors are watching out for you; that you have to have some thought and follow the rules. Wear the safety goggles, wear the safety helmet, wear the proper shoes, and ensure that you and your co-workers—you're part of a team, just like we are here in the Legislature—remain very safe.

I recall, as well, a man dying in hospital in my city of Vaughan. Unfortunately, he was electrocuted. This story is from November 24, 2015, just last year. He was a vacuum truck operator doing an excavation, when the truck boom made contact with a power line near Highway 7 and Dufferin. That is about a five-minute walk from my house. Again, the first responders at the scene—that's quite horrific.

I want to take this time to thank everyone who is there to treat the injured workers and make sure that they aren't going to be succumbing to their injuries.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations, by the way.

I also want to extend congratulations to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and, of course, to the Ellis family, who are here, and to everyone else, but particularly to him for bringing this forward. This is a major step forward and it's a really important one.

I'm the daughter of someone who succumbed to a workplace injury. My father was an absolutely ardent, active unionist in the painters and decorators union, and in the early 1970s he died because of it. He died from emphysema complications from lead-based paint back in the day. That was before the Workers Day of Mourning was even instituted. I can tell you, we mourned, and we also fought for the living. Every year at the Labour Day parade, I remember, and I still watch the injured workers and I salute them for all their incredible work. Many are right, and they have spoken about it: It's not just about death; it's also about injury.

I also very clearly remember the Metron tragedy. I was up there. There was an impromptu rally around the site when the police tape was still up. It was a horrific time. It was a horrific accident. And yes, finally, in January, it was recognized, and finally a manager did go to jail. That was a huge victory for workers everywhere.

The sad reality is that only about one in a hundred employers ever sees somebody from the Ministry of Labour. Only about one in a hundred employers ever gets a visit. That is the crux of the problem, because employers everywhere need to be visited not only for injuries—I have employers who don't pay their workers. For precarious employees, for all sorts of other psychic and physical injuries, employers need to be visited and they need to be held to account.

The Conservative member from Thornhill mentioned post-traumatic stress disorder. That was a step forward. We just got royal assent for that bill yesterday. It's not just physical injuries either; it's also mental injuries—38 suicides since January on that account. So we passed that—that's good—but it took eight years. I hope this doesn't take eight years. I hope we not only pass it today, but that it becomes law virtually immediately, and I hope even before it becomes law, this April, people listen, hear this debate and lower their flags. They don't have to wait for the law. Do the right thing, and do it now.

I'm going to leave it there because others want to weigh in, and they should, but again, thank you to all who are here who have fought on this issue for so long. To the injured workers who are still fighting WSIB: Keep fighting because we will win that too. We are proof positive here in the New Democratic Party that if you just keep on keeping on, you will win. We have and we will, and this will too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and might I say at the start, formally, congratulations on your new role. You're doing an outstanding job already.

I want to commend the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for this private member's bill, Bill 180, that he has introduced in the Legislature today. I think he deserves credit for it. He has been here now for almost three years and before that served on Windsor council for seven years, so he's got about 10 years of elected public service. I think he's well-liked by all members on all sides of the House and he deserves enormous credit, as I say, for the work that he does here.

Again, this bill, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning, is well-intentioned and is certainly a bill that our party wants to support in principle. It would establish April 28 each year as Workers Day of Mourning and require that all Canadian and Ontario flags flown outside many of our public buildings to be flown at half-mast on that day to raise awareness. I think that's a commendable suggestion. This would apply, of course, to the Legislative Building here at Queen's Park; other government of Ontario buildings; courthouses; other buildings, including city and town halls; schools and school board offices; universities; colleges; hospitals; boards of health; fire departments; ambulance services; police; crown agencies; and perhaps any other organization that might be named at a later date by regulation.

We believe that recognizing April 28 as a Workers Day of Mourning will indeed help to raise awareness about the need to be more vigilant about workplace safety. I think we all have a role to play in that regard, whether it's this Legislature, whether it's employers or whether it's trade unions and individual workers as well, working together to continually raise the bar in terms of improving workplace safety. This also provides an opportunity for us to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace, and to show compassionate support for their families.

We have heard estimates that up to 90% of workplace deaths are preventable. Obviously, our PC caucus believes that we must do all that we can to improve workplace safety, with the goal of preventing any death in the workplace.

There are actually four speakers from our caucus who want to participate in this debate, so I don't want to take too much more time, but certainly I want to inform the House of my intention to attend the day of mourning event that's coming up on April 28 at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board offices as our party's labour critic. I'm sure I will see the Minister of Labour there and some of the other members of the Legislature. It is a constituency week, but we do think it is obviously very, very important to demonstrate our interests and our support, and I certainly intend to be there.

I want to again congratulate the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his presentation this afternoon, as well as the initiative that he has brought forward. I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm so pleased the stand in this Legislature today and support my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Thank you very much for your advocacy and care.

I am glad to stand in support of Bill 180, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning. This bill takes the next step in support of killed and injured workers and recognizes them in provincial law with a Workers Day of Mourning, requiring that flags at public buildings be lowered to half-mast.

This morning, it was our honour to sign the Jersey of Courage that Caleb Ellis brought to us to sign. Thank you very much for your work, Caleb.

Many workers across Ontario are injured, maimed or killed every year on the job. People die in terrible accidents. They are injured or killed under avoidable circumstances. Speaker, we have laws; we have standards. We prioritize safety. There is no reason why anyone should be injured or killed on the job. There is no reason for anyone to be working under unsafe working conditions.

Employers who put their workers in jeopardy must be held responsible. Employers whose workers die on the job must be held responsible. The government must enforce its laws and regulations pertaining to workplace safety and make sure that working Ontarians are safe.

Every year on April 28, our labour councils, unions and organizations across our communities have beautiful and meaningful ceremonies and services across the province, but the greater community often isn't aware. By lowering the flags to half-mast across sectors, we're better able to spread that message of understanding.

Speaker, it has been over a year since firefighter hopeful Adam Brunt set out one day and did not make it home. He tragically lost his life in a training exercise while taking a private pre-service training course. Technically he wasn't yet a worker, but he was going to be. He and countless others across the province are unprotected while they train to become workers in their field. They are in a health-and-safety loophole.

There can be no loopholes or grey areas when it comes to health and safety in Ontario. We continue to call on this government to ensure that all our trainees and all our workers are kept safe as they pursue their careers.

We've been having very emotional conversations about the nature of work, and traumatizing work done by our first responders and high-stress service providers. Just this week, there was a terrible violent incident at the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. This is an awful incident, and avoidable. This is a workplace with known dangers. We need to address these concerns.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm running out of time, and I'm getting tangled, and there's so much to say on this. But really, safety needs to be our top priority. Our nurses, health care service providers, front-line works, first responders, builders, tradespeople, professionals, trainees and everyone else who sets out in the province to do their jobs deserve to work in a safe and secure environment, and deserve to come home.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm indicating clearly that I wish to support the legislation being brought forward by my friend Percy Hatfield, who for a long time, both in his career as a municipal and provincial politician, and as a member of the CBC, has been a person who has been instrumental in bringing to the attention of the people of this province the great dangers that are faced by people in the workplace, and the unfortunate accidents that have happened, or incidents that have happened, in many of those cases.

1600

One of the most solemn ceremonies all of us attend is in our own communities. We have one right near the Welland Canal because there had been an accident where someone had fallen off the Skyway Bridge at that time and died. It was an accident on that occasion. We use the word "accident" advisedly because an accident is something that can be prevented if we really think of it, and prevention is very significant.

But as we attend these ceremonies, we get to meet the individual who has an incident that's happened, and within that family someone has died. Someone went to work one day; the family hoped that person would come back and the person did not because of death in the workplace. It's an extremely solemn ceremony, and I commend the members of the labour movement who, over the years, have ensured that we remember those whose lives have been lost in this way.

I was a member of the Legislature in 1988 when the resolution was passed unanimously by members of this House—on that occasion recognizing April 28 as a day of mourning for those who are killed in the workplace. This piece of legislation will further bring to the attention of the public these tragic situations which happen to occur in the workplace from time to time.

One can say, "Well, it's symbolic," and yes, there is some symbolism in it, in terms of the flag lowering. But it's important for two reasons. It's important because it's an educational opportunity as well; people can see that something has happened, that there is a day to look at, that there is a circumstance to reflect upon. Second, it is a tribute to those who have lost their lives and to the families of those who have lost their lives.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us, because we have to think of those individuals who—a cold hand comes over their heart when someone comes to the door to say there's been a death in the family, or they receive the news by telephone or other means. So I commend the member for bringing forward this legislation. I anticipate that it will pass unanimously.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: One death is too many. One death is too many.

I thank MPP Percy Hatfield for bringing forward this bill, which I support. I think it's worthwhile to turn our attention to the preamble of the bill, because there's a narrative within that bill that warrants some repetition:

"A day of mourning ... serves to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario, helping to prevent additional deaths, injuries and diseases."

Today, a Workers Day of Mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world. However, not enough is being done within the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—to recognize this day.

It's appropriate that the province of Ontario build on the provincial resolution and on the federal act by recognizing in provincial law a Workers Day of Mourning and requiring the lowering of flags to half-mast.

This is repeating some of our earlier commentary, but approximately 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job each year while hundreds of thousands more are injured or diseased. It's also estimated that 90% of workplace deaths are preventable.

Raised awareness is necessary because risk remains an inherent part of many jobs. All workers, especially young workers, need to be aware of workplace dangers that they could face.

We continually see in media coverage incidents of industrial accidents. I have one here from Unionville, another from Markham and more that have also occurred in other places across Ontario. I'm pleased today to lend my support to the bill going forward, and I would encourage all members of the Legislature to do the same.

MPP Percy Hatfield, thank you so much for bringing forward such a solid piece of legislation.

Thank you so much, Speaker, and have a good weekend.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Kitchener–Waterloo to speak about the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's bill to properly recognize the Workers Day of Mourning in Ontario. I'd like to start by saying that of course we wholeheartedly support this bill, and it will make a difference.

It is important that we take the time to create symbols that recognize the lived reality of workers and worker safety in this province. Lowering the flag is a powerful symbol of our shared loss and our respect for the suffering of those who have lost loved ones. It raises awareness of the seriousness of the problem of death and injury in the workplace. Even more importantly, I wholeheartedly support this piece of legislation because it is directly connected to the work we should all be doing in this place to prevent any further deaths, injuries and diseases that occur in the workplace.

1610

As proud as I am to stand in support of worker health and safety, I am just as disappointed at how much work needs to yet be done. Worker safety in Ontario has not improved in any appreciable way in the past 20 years. In 1993, Ontario saw 292 worker fatalities. In 2014, there were 289. That's just a 1% difference. It's not nearly enough, when we consider how our youth, our young workers, are injured in the workplace, and when you think of the 30 young people in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 who died in work-related accidents between 2009 and 2013. During that same period as well, more than 30,000 young people received injuries resulting in lost time at work.

One of these recent fatalities in 2013 hit very close to home for me. Nick Lalonde was 23 years old when he was killed on the job in 2013, on a construction site in Waterloo. He was knocked off the side of an 11-storey apartment building. He had not been properly trained. He left behind his partner and his young daughter, Aloe. This tragedy was entirely preventable. Since then, we have repeatedly asked the government to act on the recommendations to establish proper fall prevention training that finally happened on April 1, 2015.

It bears noting that at that workplace, there were 17 work orders put in place after this accident. The point is that you can inspect these workplaces after a worker dies, but that doesn't prevent the injury and it doesn't prevent the death. It's going to take more than a Chief Prevention Officer to keep workers safe in the province of Ontario; it is going to take all of us in this place, starting with the member's motion today. This bill recognizes that lowering the flags is an opportunity for us to share in this work together, and I commend him for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to rise to speak to this bill on behalf of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. He talked at length about the symbols associated with this. Of course, it doesn't bring workers back, but there's the symbolism and the hope that it will prevent future injuries.

The symbolism is extremely important. We see it on Remembrance Day every year. As a young boy, I used to go to remembrance services with my grandfather, a First World War vet—my father was a Second World War vet—and uncles and aunts. It instilled in me a deep belief in the importance of remembering what happened in war that I carry with me to this day. It is an extremely important day in my life.

The same will apply if we recognize in this expanded way April 28 as the Workers Day of Mourning. We'll see this, if we reach out to the schools and hospitals, everywhere across publicly funded institutions. It's so important because young people will now have a better sense of why this is happening and will be able to talk about it.

Just yesterday, we had the Ontario career colleges here and I met a young man named Emidio D'Alfonso. He runs a company called Pre-Apprenticeship Training Institute; they provide pre-experience for apprenticeships going into construction, in which worker safety protocols are extraordinarily important. He does this on behalf of the Merit OpenShop Contractors Association of Ontario and the CLAC sector. Those workers who will be working in construction will get that excellent training they need to go forward and work safely.

It was important for me as young man when I went out west and I worked on the oil rigs. I met up with a friend of my father who was in the oil industry and I got a job out in the oil rigs. He told me the day I went out there, "Be sure that you read the safety logs in that rig every

morning before you start work." I was able to see the kinds of things that were happening in oil rigs across the province. I was 19 years old. I noticed, as a result of reading that, one of the big wrenches they use for tightening pipes was fraying. At the age of 19, I stood up to the drill rig boss and I said, "No, we're fixing that before we carry on." I know it helped me in that situation. The right to refuse is extraordinarily important. It's a great bill and you will have my support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to wrap up; two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to thank everybody who has made comments on the bill that has been proposed. I especially want to thank Caleb Ellis and Kelly Semkiw for coming today and bringing David Ellis back to life for us.

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I hope what you heard today means to you that he's going to live for us, as well. We won't forget David Ellis. We want you to keep on bringing that message of safer workplaces across our province and across our country, because you're doing a great job. I know you have already collected more than 500,000 signatures, and we are behind you 100%.

Members, the jersey will still be out at the end of this today, and if anyone still wants to sign the Jersey of Courage, we would welcome that. I know that a lot of us signed it earlier today.

A million people die on the job around the world every year, and in many countries it's accepted as business as usual. That's unfortunate. It doesn't happen here because we have the Workers Day of Mourning, we have district labour councils, we have the CLC and the OFL, and we have the Ellis family, speaking on worker safety every time, reminding us of what is going on out there. I'll say again to Rolly Marentette and Tracie Edward, my folks in Windsor, thank you so much for keeping the workers' day of mourning alive in my community.

We've talked about the symbolism of the lowered flag, Speaker. It's a sign of dignity, it's a symbol of respect and it's a call for justice. What we want public institutions to do is to join us in that. I think it's a worthwhile project.

The cabinet has the ability to move this forward in a rapid fashion; we know it can be done. We also know it should be done, and I hope we can move this bill to passage in very quick time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private member's public business has expired.

ONTARIO DOWN SYNDROME DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE ONTARIENNE DE LA TRISOMIE 21

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will now deal with ballot item number 27, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved second reading of Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day. Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Dickson, pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Joe Dickson: —the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Berardinetti has moved private member's notice of motion number 68. Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

WORKERS DAY OF MOURNING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE DEUIL POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hadfield has moved second reading of Bill 180, an Act to proclaim a Workers' Day of Mourning. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is now referred to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: —the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

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

Ms. Damerla has moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I request that the bill go to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): General government. So ordered.

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The ayes have it. Carried.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, April 11, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1616.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short
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Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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
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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
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Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Peter Tabuns
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