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Thursday 12 May 2016

Jeudi 12 mai 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ATTÉNUATION DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the House today and once again give my support to Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Ontario is a province with one of the highest emission rates of greenhouse gases in Canada, and we have to tackle this generational problem head-on. While members opposite might point out that other jurisdictions in the world might pollute more, we do not feel that this is an excuse to sit back and wait as the environmental and economic costs of climate change continue to climb.

Forgive me, Speaker; I will be sharing my time with the member for Halton, the member for Ottawa South and the member for Burlington.

Ontario's proposed approach to cap-and-trade strikes the right balance between reducing greenhouse gas pollution and fostering economic growth. I stand in support of this bill today, which listened to and considered all the concerns raised by various stakeholder groups and members from the parties opposite. Responding to their concerns throughout the committee process, this bill has been further strengthened to improve accountability and transparency, increase consideration for low-income households, enhance market integrity and protect personal information.

Today, I would like to focus specifically on two aspects of the bill: the protections it offers low-income households in our province, as well as the respect and acknowledgement that it provides to aboriginal communities. Protecting those who would face the most hardships due to the increased costs of climate change remains an important priority for this government. Together with the third party, we worked to bring forward motions that would require a climate change action plan to consider the impact of cap-and-trade on low-income households and assist them with Ontario's transition to the low-carbon economy. Everyone will benefit from a greener Ontario, and, with the appropriate safeguards in place, we will also ensure that the most vulnerable will not be disadvantaged.

Madam Speaker, I am also very proud that this bill acknowledges the special relationship that the First Nations and Métis communities have with the environment. Over the past two years, I have had the honour to meet with many First Nations communities across the province, and I've heard first-hand how deeply connected they are, both spiritually and culturally, to the land, water, air and animals. Our government has been committed to engaging in meaningful dialogue and recognizing the traditional territories of First Nations communities. Building on this commitment, this bill includes a provision that requires the minister to consider any traditional ecological knowledge a First Nation or Métis community will offer in respect to that action plan. This bill also includes provisions that make it clear that nothing in the bill is intended to take away from the protections provided to aboriginal and treaty rights in the Canadian Constitution.

I'm also happy to note that we worked with a third party to strengthen the government's accountability and reporting on our progress under the action plan. Amendments were made in committee to require that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change publish a progress report every year rather than at least every five years. The long-term benefits of a clean and sustainable environment will ensure that all future generations will be able to enjoy everything that our province has to offer.

This bill allows Ontario to remain a leader in tackling climate change as it is only through decisive and affirmative action that we will be able to make a positive difference. This bill demonstrates Ontario's commitment to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and to keep the global average temperature increase to less than two degrees Celsius.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members to support this bill today, as it is the right thing to do for the planet, for Ontario and for our children and grandchildren's futures. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 172, and to have the opportunity to do that.

Before I talk a little bit more about the bill and the importance of it, I think it's important for us to underline the fact that climate change is a global problem. I heard the Leader of the Opposition in his questioning yesterday with regard to his criticism of the cap-and-trade program. What it reminded me of is the isolationist policy of the former federal government and the actual denial of climate change. To pretend that we can operate in isolation from the rest of the world is naive—maybe even more than naive; it's wrong-headed.

The reality is that for the first day ever this year in China, they had a red-alert smog day. What that red-alert smog day means is, "Don't go outside. It's not safe. Don't go outside." I don't think we can imagine that here. I know some of my colleagues whom have been to China—most recently the Deputy Premier, who I had a conversation with the other day about what it was like. The first thing she talked about was the air, and that they know. Leaders and governments know there. That's top of mind for them. You can't actually have an economy that functions well if you have an unhealthy population.

That's why we need to do this, and that's why we need to do this in concert with California and Quebec, because there will be a price on carbon. That price on carbon will increase as we go along. It will be a global market. It is a global challenge. We don't have any other choice but to work with those people around us to make sure that we tackle this problem, because if we don't, it's going to have significant impacts on everybody in this world.

I do know that the bill did go through committee and that there was some substantial improvement. The official opposition is not supportive of it. They have another plan, which I believe is something that is vague. I don't know if I would describe it as a plan. I think it got patched, or announced very quickly, very precipitously, to the surprise of many members on the other side.

I think that if you're serious about climate change, if you recognize that it's a reality, you have to recognize that it's something that we do in concert with our partners in the rest of the world. That's why the cap-and-trade program is key, I believe, to fighting climate change, not just in this province but globally.

To add a little bit more in terms of Ontario's position in terms of cap-and-trade: We closed all the coal-fired generating plants. That is the single biggest drop in carbon in North America. What that has led to is an enormous savings in health care costs and enormous savings in terms of people's individual lives, childhood asthma and illnesses. It's the equivalent of taking five million cars off the road.

0910

When you're looking at cap-and-trade structure organizations, we benefit from what we have done by closing those coal plants. I don't think we would have been there if the opposition were making decisions about what we're going to do with coal. We'd still be burning coal. The reality is that, yes, if you stop burning coal, it will cost us more money. It has cost us more money, because we want energy security. But we're going to reap the benefits of that, because the world is moving towards a carbon economy. Okay? That's an important thing for us to remember, and I want to emphasize that we can't do this in isolation.

I think that for the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and talk about the flow of money back and forth on one side is—I don't think it's naive. I don't think it's naive; I think it's wrong-headed. It speaks to the lack of a plan, the lack of an understanding of what's going on in the world today, and what I would describe as an isolationist policy, a policy which would see Ontario withdraw from the rest of the world. I feel it's important to mention that, because I've heard the criticism from the other side. I really strongly believe that what we're doing here in terms of the investment that we're going to make as a result of cap-and-trade, in connection with the rest of the world, is going to help us innovate, benefit and advance manufacturing.

One of the things we've done in terms of moving off of coal was to incent the construction of renewable energy here in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much to the member from Sarnia. Thank you very much for your information. I think it's an important thing to remember that the world is moving to a different kind of economy. If you take a look at what is happening in the United States and how they're looking at moving off coal, how they're looking at gaining renewables, the kind of investments that they're making there, it's very similar to what we saw in the auto sector over the years. We build cars and sell them south of the border. So we're going to build renewable energy, we're going to create innovation, and we're going to sell it south of the border and around the world. That's what we've been doing, and they're buying our products, as the Premier said.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much. I was just checking to see who is—I didn't want to run the clock on any of my colleagues, but they're running a little late, so I'll just keep running the clock. Getting back to what we were talking about, I'm going to go back to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: We were just talking about the auto industry; there we go. We were at the auto industry, and I was talking about how renewable energy and that innovation and that industry that we're building there is very similar to what the auto industry has been about here. We are going to need a change. That's part of cap-and-trade. It's the kind of innovation that we're going to bring to the auto industry, that we're going to incent, that we're going to do through the funds that we have, through cap-and-trade. I think those things are critical.

I don't want to seem like I'm picking on the official opposition, but at the time of the great recession, they

were against an investment in the auto industry. They were against us supporting the auto industry at a critical time. There were 400,000 jobs in Ontario that depended on that. That was a surprising thing, and that's kind of an isolationist policy as well. I think it's important to recognize that through green energy and what we've invested in renewables, we're building an economy; we're building an industry that is going to be critical in the world in the next 30, 40, 50 years. We're going to be the innovators. We're going to be the people who build. We are going to be the people who bring this kind of technology to the rest of the world. That is what our investment has done and is what our investment will continue to do through cap-and-trade.

You know, one of the things that I think is important to recognize in this bill is that in this Legislature we often debate things that can be fairly short-term—in the space of five to 10 years or less. We're making adjustments and changes to legislation to adapt to what things are like right now. But the work that's really important is the work we do that looks 20, 30, 40 years down the road when we're not around here, when most of us will be gone or close to going—our children, our grandchildren.

What this bill speaks to is a recognition that we have a responsibility to leave behind a world that's livable and manageable, and a world in which people—our children and our children's children—can thrive and prosper. That's a collective responsibility we have here, and I'm very proud that the minister has put this bill forward, and congratulate him on it.

Anything we do in here will be the matter of some debate and the matter of some controversy. It will be the matter of some criticism and opposition, and that's a good thing. That's how you get good legislation. That's how you get things through committee and make bills stronger. What I do want to emphasize, again, is to go back to the beginning of what I said: I don't think Ontario can work in isolation from the rest of this world. That's why I support Bill 172.

I thank you very much for your time, and I cede my time to the member for Burlington.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Good morning, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House this morning and join the member from Ottawa South and the member from Kingston on this critically important piece of legislation. I had the privilege of sitting in committee and working with colleagues to make sure that this legislation passes and has the kind of scrutiny and conversation that legislation of this import needs.

I think it is worth noting, though, and worth repeating, because there has been a lot of conversation in this House about how to tackle climate change, the most significant issue facing our planet. I think that's well known, but we're thinking about it, because it doesn't just affect Ontario. We don't live in a silo. We live in a global economy and a global climate. It's changing, and it's having significant and real impacts on the lives of people, not just in my community of Burlington or in our province or in our country, but around the globe. It's changes in weather patterns, temperature—it's all of those things—and we cannot, because of the import of this issue, see it just through a lens that focuses uniquely on our own borders. This is an issue that really grabs us all and affects us all. We must—we must—work with other jurisdictions.

I had the privilege early in my career of working with the federal government to set up something called Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It is an organization that is thriving and continues to thrive because it is playing an important role in offering opportunities for really smart people who are developing technological and green technology solutions to help us as a country to not only combat climate change but also grow a significant part in the economy.

When we were in committee, we heard that California, despite the most robust and strict regulations impacting climate change and vehicle emissions and that kind of thing—despite all of that—has the most robust manufacturing sector and leads the country in terms of green technologies and innovation. There's that old saying about how necessity is the mother of invention. Well, we have arrived at necessity. We are beyond necessity now, where we're seeing the changes in our climate and the devastating impacts of floods. In my own community in Burlington in 2014, we had a once-in-100-year storm that devastated 3,100 homes and led to $80 million in insurance claims. It was huge. It was significant. It impacted people's lives.

0920

I can tell you that the residents of Burlington—our chamber of commerce has won national accolades for its action on climate change. It has been a leader in this regard. Businesses in my community are seized with this import and they're actually in the vanguard and the forefront of technological innovations. There are companies like Terrapure, which are incredibly significant in the lives of companies who are trying to be successful in the new carbon economy.

Our government, through this legislation, is setting a long-term framework for climate change that is going to help companies like Terrapure and others like it to be more successful, to lead our globe in terms of innovative approaches.

We're smart people here in Ontario. I have confidence in the ingenuity, the intelligence and the innovation capability of our manufacturers to make a difference in the lives of the people around the globe, in the lives of Canadians and to lead that technological innovation.

The framework that we are putting in place through our cap-and-trade system is going to encourage that kind of spirit of innovation and the very kind of innovation that not only creates green technology jobs and green economy jobs, but really helps our innovative Ontarians take the next level in terms of commercializing the very technologies that are going to change the lives of people around the globe.

I hope that everyone in this House is going to pass this legislation with a resounding yes, because it deserves it.

Our economy needs it. Our environment needs it and our entrepreneurs need it too, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for this time. I appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a question and comment—I have, of course, because of the standing orders, two minutes now to ask questions or make comments on the speeches that were just offered.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: That's right. Quite often in the context of these debates, members will stand up on questions and comments and just give a short, two-minute speech on their views and issues. But I want to engage the government members on the speeches that they gave, because I know they all gave speeches that they believe in, that they're passionate about. They're concerned about this issue.

I would ask them this question. I hope we'll get an answer from whoever will respond on behalf of the government, that they will actually answer this question. That is, yesterday the Ontario Chamber of Commerce sent out a public message indicating that they are urging the government to delay the cap-and-trade plan for one year. They say, "The purpose for our calling for us to slow down before we hurry up here is to make sure we understand fully the unintended consequence or at least the cost-benefit analysis, and that ... we answer some of the questions that remain outstanding from the business community." That is a quote from the chamber's president and CEO, Allan O'Dette.

He's saying that they can live with a program to deal with climate change, but they're very concerned about rushing ahead and not having all the details. They also make the point that the government has yet to release an analysis of the economic impact of cap-and-trade, and businesses are still seeking details.

I would ask—one of the government members is going to respond eventually to this question: What do they think about this request from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce? Are they willing to support it? Do they recognize that there are thousands of businesses in the province of Ontario represented by the chamber of commerce, that jobs are at risk, and whether or not they would express support today for a one-year delay in the government's cap-and-trade proposal?

I would ask that question of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm honoured to join in the debate because climate change is really something that's so crucially important for us to address. It's a global initiative. We need to make sure that we have partners around the world, but it's also something that we have a provincial obligation to take steps and to show leadership on.

Our position has been all along, when it comes to any initiative for preventing the increase in greenhouse gas emissions—whether it's looking at reducing our carbon footprint or tackling issues of climate change—we need to have three principles in mind. Those are that the implementation of any legislation or any policy needs to be fair, needs to be transparent, and it needs to be effective.

These are three elements that can apply to any legislation but are particularly important for climate change. The reason is, if our policies are presented in a way that isn't effective, then they do nothing to advance the goals of protecting our environment. Really, as a society, it's something crucially important that we protect. This is literally our home, not only Ontario but Canada, North America and the entire world. We need to show leadership in how we provide effective stewardship of this resource, this planet, this home.

Transparency: With respect to initiatives, we need to ensure that whatever is going on is transparent; that the rules, the guidelines, the numbers—what are the targets and how much in terms of emissions are we actually reducing? We need to know those numbers so that there's some transparency. Also, that transparency feeds back into effectiveness. Finally, fairness: The implementation of this legislation needs to be fair. It does not need to be burdensome on everyday people more than those who are the biggest polluters. It needs to be a balanced approach.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm quite delighted to be able to stand and give two minutes of comment on Bill 172, the cap-and-trade legislation. I wanted to start off by reinforcing a comment by the member from Ottawa South, who spoke at the beginning, about how the challenge of climate change is not one that occurs or obeys or listens to any political boundary. Climate change is a global issue. We cannot be isolationist in our approach. That's why a made-in-Ontario solution that only applies to Ontario will not be successful. I'm quite happy to see that we're partnering with other states and other governments to build more of a national and, perhaps one day, international approach to solving the problem.

I've had the privilege, Madam Speaker, to work in parts of Canada that, 20 years ago, were being impacted by climate change. Working in the Far North in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon and seeing firsthand as long ago as 20 years that the climate in our Far North was changing: places like K'atlodeeche and Tsiigehtchic and Aklavik, where animals that had never been there before were able to overwinter because winters were not as severe as they once were, where words were having to be created in Gwich'in to address wasps and robins and thunderstorms—things that had never happened before. It's too big an issue to ignore, and I think we all agree on that. Our approach is a well-reasoned and rational approach to beginning to solve the problem.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a couple of moments in which to add a few comments. I want to come back to the issue that the member from Welling-

ton–Halton Hills referred to because, as the critic for the Ontario Registered Pension Plan, this is a déjà vu, where decisions had been made behind closed doors, largely, on the mechanics and the possible impacts of the ORPP in a manner similar to garner the concern that the chamber of commerce has voiced, not only back in the debate on the pension, but now we see exactly the same thing on cap-and-trade.

I think it should serve as a reminder to this government that there are many stakeholders when you are looking at making any kind of significant legislative changes. This is yet another one which has been done in a manner that has created more anxiety and more uncertainty, once again, on an ambitious initiative that the government has taken. A one-year delay was what the chamber was looking at with the pension plan. That's what they're looking at for this as well.

It should serve as a reminder to the government. We are in a democratic process. We do have to listen, we do have to understand a cost-benefit analysis, and we do have to look at the impacts on everyone.

0930

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond. Thanks to the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Newmarket–Aurora and York–Simcoe.

I want to start with responding to the member from York–Simcoe. It's interesting that the member would raise the issue of the ORPP, which I think is something that is also a responsibility of all of us in this Legislature: to look after the retirement income of the people who we represent 30 or 40 years from now. It's kind of an interesting analogy. I know that the party opposite does not support the ORPP.

I think that's wrong-headed. I think that our responsibility is to ensure that our children and our children's children have a secure retirement. We can only do that if we take action now.

In regard to taking action now on Bill 172, I appreciate what the member from Wellington–Halton Hills had to say about the request from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I would like to assure him that we are working with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to phase in cap-and-trade. At the same time, we also have to give businesses some certainty, and we very much appreciate working with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We did work with them on the HST, and it's interesting that the members opposite—the party opposite—were not supportive of the chamber's position at that time, which was the harmonization of taxes, which was going to benefit businesses and make things much simpler and really help our manufacturing sector.

I take that all with a grain of salt. We will continue to work with the Ontario chamber to make sure that Ontario's businesses—we have one of the lowest combined corporate tax rates in North America—will continue to flourish. I think they would say, and they would agree, that we do live in a world. We can't afford to be isolationists, and we have to work with the rest of the world to fight climate change.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased and privileged to have this opportunity this morning to speak to third reading of Bill 172.

I want to begin by commending and congratulating our party's critic for the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the member for Huron–Bruce. She gave a one-hour speech yesterday in the Legislature to lead off our party's response to the third reading debate of this important issue. She has worked very hard in the standing committee, dealing with the public hearings that took place as well as the clause-by-clause amendments. She has done an extraordinary job.

Of course, those of us who are in the caucus support her efforts. We want to express our appreciation to her for the work that she's done. It's not easy to stand up in this House and speak for an hour and engage the House fully; but I was here for her speech yesterday afternoon and I thought she did a remarkable job, such that I even asked her for a copy of it so I could review it in terms of my preparation for my remarks this morning.

I think it's important to restate something that she said in her conclusion, because, again, she spoke for an hour, but her concluding comments, I thought, summed up very well the position of our caucus as well as many of her concerns. She said yesterday, "I've only outlined a few of the significant issues that the Ontario PC Party has pinpointed during the amendment process in committee and will continue to discuss as the Legislature proceeds through third reading. We're confident that we performed our due diligence by voicing Ontarians' concerns about this legislation."

Just to digress, I would certainly confirm that statement. She has done an extraordinary job voicing the concerns of Ontarians and the people who are concerned about this bill.

"However, it should be clear from my remarks," she said, "that we cannot support this bill as it moves forward. The PC Party of Ontario cannot prop up another massive taxation scheme that will only make life more expensive for Ontarians and more difficult for business. We've also made it clear that the Liberals should withdraw Bill 172 and develop a revenue-neutral model that protects taxpayers and is subject to rigorous, independent oversight."

That summarizes in basically one sentence the position that has been taken by our caucus and our leader, the member for Simcoe North, who has outlined his views on this issue and taken a strong position too—not without controversy, but a strong position—saying we need to be willing to talk about a price on carbon, but it's absolutely essential that it be revenue-neutral and not be a net tax increase on the people of Ontario, and whatever revenue needs to be open and transparent, not secretive.

The member for Huron–Bruce went on. She said: "Instead, our party remains committed to finding solu-

tions that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting our economy. We need to think creatively and innovatively." I agree with that wholeheartedly. "We must consider a combination of measures, including different product standards, new technologies, transportation alternatives, fuel-switching incentives—i.e., geothermal, natural gas and retrofitting initiatives."

Madam Chair, as you would know, a few years ago when our party was in government, we actually had a select committee on alternative fuels. They did good work, coming up with a report with significant recommendations for provincial government action. I think that report needs to be revisited again, obviously, and perhaps even updated, because many other technologies have come forward in the interval. But again, it's something that we have talked about in the past.

The member for Huron–Bruce went on to conclude, "It's amazing what industries are doing to reduce their emissions and make Ontario a more environmentally friendly place to live." So she was acknowledging the work that industry has undertaken on its own. We know everyone who lives in Ontario is concerned about this issue, and the vast majority of businesses are responsible in taking their own proactive approaches to deal with emissions and try to reduce them.

She says, "This innovation is inspiring and will help Ontario grow into a greener, more affordable and more productive place to live. I look forward to helping make that a reality." Again, that was the concluding comment by the member for Huron–Bruce. I thought those were very eloquent words and needed to be restated in this House.

As I said earlier, and as was restated by the member for York–Simcoe, there is news about this debate. Late yesterday, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce made a public statement, indicating that they were going to be making a public request of the government to have a one-year delay on the cap-and-trade implementation. They indicated that they were very concerned, that there is not yet an economic analysis of the impact of cap-and-trade and that many of their members—and they represent thousands of businesses representing many hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, of jobs—are very concerned about this and want more details. Obviously, if indeed, as one of the government members just indicated, they are prepared to work with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which is what was said by the government member, surely they will want to ensure that businesses have the requisite details before they implement the plan. That would be, I think, a fairly straightforward proposition, and I would urge the government at least to consider this one-year-delay request.

As the member for York–Simcoe pointed out in the past, when the Ontario Chamber of Commerce raised the request for a delay in the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, the government was apparently of the view that they had to listen to that and were prepared to work with the Ontario chamber. So we need to see the same co-operation here, and we would look forward to a response that is favourable.

I have actually—it was just posted on the website of the Chamber of Commerce just minutes ago, and my staff printed it off for me and brought it down here. The letter is dated actually today. It's addressed to the Honourable Glen Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, dated today from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, signed by president and CEO Allan O'Dette. I think this is very, very important information and is very relevant to this debate, Madam Speaker. So I'm going to inform the House of what is contained in the letter.

"Thank you for your continued engagement with Ontario businesses as you move ahead with the implementation of Ontario's cap-and-trade system. As outlined in our 2015 report, Clean Profits, and subsequent submissions, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and the province's business community understands the need to address climate change. If designed effectively, the cap-and-trade system presents significant economic and environmental opportunities for the province"—if designed effectively.

"Recently, the government introduced and received comments on Bill 172, Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 and its associated regulations. We hope the business community's feedback is taken into consideration as the government moves ahead with the implementation of its cap-and-trade system." That statement says they're not sure that their feedback has been taken into consideration, clearly.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce "was encouraged by the greater level of specificity contained in Bill 172 surrounding cap-and-trade revenue. The creation of a separate greenhouse gas reduction account to hold these funds, more clarity around authorized expenditures from this account, and annual reporting requirements are all positive steps towards transparency.

"Despite these positive developments our members remain concerned with a number of aspects of the cap-and-trade system. We hope you will be able to provide greater clarity on these issues.

"(1) What will be the economic impact of the cap-and-trade system?"

0940

Clearly this is a very important question that needs to be asked and that has yet to be answered by the government. I digress somewhat from the text of the letter when I say that, but the fact is that the chamber of commerce is agreeing that there has not been an adequate economic impact analysis done. Surely that would be a prerequisite of introducing a policy such as this in today's economy, you would think.

"In Clean Profits, we urged the government to conduct and publicly release the results of an economic analysis of the cap-and-trade system, including sector-level impacts. This information is essential to help businesses and consumers understand how they will be impacted by a price on carbon. In particular, sector-level information is important to inform non-covered businesses that will not be directly subject to the carbon price, as the specific

impacts of cap-and-trade on their business can be more difficult to determine.

"We have not received any information regarding the projected economic impact of the cap-and-trade system in Ontario. We strongly urge the government to release the results of any analysis it may have undertaken as soon as possible, so that Ontario businesses can best prepare for the implementation of the new system."

Again, I'll digress from the letter, but what they're saying is that if the government has done an economic impact analysis and they're keeping it secret, that is unacceptable. I would submit that it is essential that if indeed the government has done an impact analysis, it has to be released. We need to know the details of what the impact of this is going to be. If they haven't done an economic impact analysis, they are absolutely delinquent in terms of their administration of government and this issue. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that most likely there has been an economic impact analysis that was prepared for cabinet, and it needs to be released into the public domain.

Again, back to the letter:

"(2) How will cap-and-trade revenue be invested and administered?

"While Bill 172 sets the parameters whereby cap-and-trade revenue can be spent, questions remain about how these funds will actually be used and how the greenhouse gas reduction account will be administered.

"The OCC continues to emphasize the need for cap-and-trade revenue to be reinvested into the business community. Directing cap-and-trade revenue towards efforts that facilitate businesses' transition to a lower-carbon economy, such as investments in low-carbon processes, technology, and other capital, will be essential for Ontario to meet the government's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. Providing transitional funding will also be critical to help prevent carbon leakage, or the relocation of operations to jurisdictions with no greenhouse gas reduction policies."

This is a very important point that they're making. Obviously, if businesses have to transition, they need to be able to make those investments to ensure their emissions are reduced and reducing. If they have to compete with jurisdictions that have no greenhouse gas reduction policies, which they will, or that have different reduction policies, there has to be transition assistance; otherwise, we're going to lose jobs. There's no question about that.

Again, back to the letter:

"Currently, the mechanisms by which funds from the account will be distributed are unclear. Who will be eligible to receive this money? How could a business with a plan to reduce its carbon footprint access these funds? Which principles and criteria will be applied to evaluate and compare project proposals? How long will the application process take?

"If this revenue is to help Ontario drive emissions reductions, then it must be available from the beginning. To provide for a wide range of solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, access to this revenue should not be overly restrictive. We urge the government to finalize and communicate the details of revenue administration and distribution in advance of the launch of the cap-and-trade system, so that businesses are prepared to take advantage of this opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint quickly. Government should work with the business community to ensure that the mechanisms to access these funds are simple, fair, and transparent."

Again, that speaks to their basic point, which is a request to delay the implementation for at least one year. If this is going to be meaningful, if indeed it's going to be a successful policy, they need to work with business. This clearly indicates why.

Back to the letter:

"(3) How, and when, will offsets be available?

"Bill 172 sets out the requirements for the registration of offsets, but contains few other details. MOECC," the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, "notes in the proposed regulation document that a separate offsets regulation will be proposed later in 2016," that being this year.

"Offset credits could play an important role in increasing the overall effectiveness of Ontario's cap-and-trade system. Allowing covered entities to purchase offsets provides them with another vehicle to comply with their obligations under cap-and-trade, and can often be a lower-cost alternative. By allowing non-covered sectors to sell credits, an offset market can also provide an economic incentive for non-covered businesses to reduce their emissions. This expands the greenhouse gas-reducing potential of the cap-and-trade system.

"To play a role in cap-and-trade compliance, however, both covered entities and entities looking to sell offsets need much more information. How can offset projects be verified and registered? How can businesses buy and sell credits?

"As such, we request that the government finalize the details of offsets regulations and associated protocols as quickly as possible to coincide with the launch of the cap-and-trade system. If Ontario is to support a viable offsets market and drive further emissions reductions, credits must be available for covered entities to purchase soon after implementation. The OCC and our members would welcome an opportunity to work with you directly in the coming weeks."

Question 4 that they are asking in this letter: "What will the cap-and-trade system look like after 2020?"

This is a very important question, too, Madam Speaker, because it speaks to the medium- and long-term effect of this policy, and obviously businesses are concerned about that because they think in term of the short term, the medium term and the long term. They have to make long-term plans in order to remain viable and profitable and to create the new jobs that we're going to need today and in the future.

They say, "Certainty is essential to effective business planning and risk mitigation. Businesses in Ontario have little insight into what the design of Ontario's cap-and-trade system will be after 2020. While we understand that

the government is focused on getting the cap-and-trade system ready for a 2017 launch, post-2020 design elements are important considerations for businesses looking to make long-term investments in the province. In particular, many covered entities are wondering whether some free allowances will be carried over into future compliance periods. This has been done in other jurisdictions to maintain competitiveness and reduce carbon leakage.

"We urge the government to, where possible, increase the clarity of system design beyond the first compliance period.

"Overall, we continue to hear that businesses are feeling uncertain about the incoming cap-and-trade system and unprepared for its full implementation next year. To produce the most effective environmental and economic outcomes, it is important that government takes the time get the design of cap-and-trade right." I agree wholeheartedly with that statement, Madam Speaker. "This was underscored at the OCC's recent annual general meeting, where the Ontario chamber network voted to support the delay of cap-and-trade implementation to allow government and the business community more time to prepare. As such, we encourage the government to consider delaying the implementation of the cap-and-trade system until 2018.

"The OCC and its membership understand the need to address climate change and will continue to contribute to this conversation. We welcome engagement with the Ontario government and the broader business community as government moves ahead with the implementation of the cap-and-trade system. Providing clarity on these and other questions will be essential to create a system that reduces emissions while fostering the conditions necessary for continued economic growth and prosperity."

That is signed, as I said earlier, by Allan O'Dette, the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Given that that's new information relevant to this debate, I thought that it was important to highlight that. I wish I had more time. I'm running out of time and I had so much more to say.

I have to say something, though, that has concerned me for some time, and that is the fact of the provincial government's efforts to paint the Conservative Party, in particular, as climate deniers. There has even been a statement made by one of the senior government ministers—it was made in this House some time ago—saying that no Conservative MPP, until very recently, had ever even acknowledged that climate change was a fact, or had ever even talked about it in the Ontario Legislature.

I wish to refer to Hansard, from the Ontario Legislature, dated October 5, 2006. That is almost 10 years ago. I was speaking in this House in response to a private member's bill that was being brought forward at the time by the member for Ottawa–Orléans, Phil McNeely. We can use his name now that he's retired from this place. He had something called An Act to make April 21 Climate Change Awareness Day. This is, again, almost 10 years ago.

I spoke in favour of his bill, and in the context of my brief remarks, I said this: "I think it is fair to say that whether you look at it as climate change or global warming, it is a real concern of many people in the province of Ontario. Certainly, it's a huge concern for many people in Waterloo–Wellington;"—that was my riding at the time—"I'm amongst those people. The preponderance of scientific evidence seems to suggest that human activity in recent years is at least accelerating this change, if not a contributing factor. Obviously, it's something that we all have to be concerned about, all of us who care about the future. All of us should, obviously.

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"As a father of three children, my wife and I are obviously very concerned about the world that our children and our grandchildren will inherit. All of us should share this concern and all of us should be part of the solution."

I said that almost 10 years ago, so I was more than annoyed when I heard one of the government ministers indicate that no Conservative had ever acknowledged that this was an issue.

Tomorrow, I am meeting with a constituent by the name of Roger Gordon. I have written a number of e-mails and letters to the government on his behalf. He has his own company, and he calls it Green NH3. He has an ammonia-based fuel that he believes would represent a substantial solution to our energy challenge. I call attention to it because I'm going to be meeting with him again tomorrow. I would encourage the government to revisit the file that I brought to their attention about the potential for ammonia-based fuel.

I also want to use the one minute that I have left to call attention to the private member's resolution that I introduced in the Legislature last fall. It was passed unanimously in this House during private members' business to highlight the Wellington county Green Legacy Programme. For the 150th anniversary of the county of Wellington, they developed an ambitious plan to plant 150,000 trees in the county of Wellington as a celebration for the 150th anniversary. It seemed ambitious. The scope was very ambitious, as a matter of fact. Every year since then, they have planted more than 150,000 trees in the county of Wellington.

I am calling upon the provincial government to take the county of Wellington's Green Legacy Programme province-wide and create an Ontario green legacy programme, with the ambitious goal of planting 150 million trees in the province of Ontario, harnessing the idealism and the volunteer spirit of Ontarians as a celebration for the 150th anniversary of the province of Ontario within a confederated Canada in 2017. I urge the government to embrace the plan.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: First, it needs to be stated that New Democrats support movement on climate change. We agree that it is an important issue facing our generation and facing the world today.

But one of the things that I have a difficult time with is that, for all the bluster of this government, like the Minister of the Environment saying things like how we have a huge historic challenge and millions of lives are at stake—you would think that this government would expand the scope, that they wouldn't take one piece of legislation and tout it out like they're the best things and they're going to single-handedly solve the climate change crisis that we have, and they would look beyond that.

One of the things that was mentioned that I think needs to be mentioned again is some of the challenges that we have in our own province, in Ontario's north.

We have northern indigenous communities, and this really needs to be stressed: They rely completely on diesel generation to power their entire communities. We know that this is something that is expensive. It's unreliable. It's unsafe for the people who have to maintain the roads, transport it, and we also know that it doesn't meet demand. It's not good for the environment.

The government knows this, and yet if we look to the most recent budget, this government's 2016 budget, we see that when it comes to connecting these communities to our hydro grid, where they can have access to free-falling water, of which there is an abundance in northern Ontario, these First Nation communities are told that they need to work with like-minded proponents and come up with some kind of a compromise and do it on their own. How is that solving climate change? How is that being respectful of our citizens across this province? It is not.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I do want to speak to this very important bill, and I want to speak to it from the point of view of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

The previous speaker highlighted in her remarks the importance of this to our aboriginal communities, and I could not agree more. I have visited close to 70 of our First Nation communities in Ontario, and I've virtually visited all of the northern communities. I can tell you that at every visit, when we sit around the table in the band council office, one of the issues that is raised, among a plethora of other issues, front and centre is their concern about climate change, and then they tell me the practical effects of what is happening to them.

I will give you one example why climate change is so important for First Nation communities. The remote communities depend on something we describe as ice roads, which are put in as soon as the land freezes and lakes and rivers freeze. They can ship in the heavy-duty stuff that is needed in the communities that they can't bring in in the summer. Traditionally in the past, the ice roads have lasted for three months, four months, somewhere in there—to ship in the heavy materials that they need for the rest of the season.

Now I'm told at these meetings that I go to that effectively the ice road season is reduced to about six weeks—maybe seven weeks. That has completely changed the schedule of bringing in the heavy materials and other things that they need. There is a very practical way that climate change is affecting First Nations communities—four months to six or seven weeks.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to add my comments to those that have been said here. I think that we all agree that we need to ensure that our earth is healthy. We need to have clean soil, we need to have clean air, we need to have clean water, and we need to do it within a framework of ensuring that future generations have a strong, robust economy here in Ontario and here in Canada.

I want to remind the members opposite that just because you say something doesn't mean that it's factually correct in terms of when you talk about how our side of the House feels about an issue. I invite the members opposite to come and meet with us—we're available; I have coffee sometimes with some members from other parties—to understand our concerns that this has to be done in a manner that does not bankrupt the taxpayers of the province and does not drive business out of the province.

The figures that we are given—these are expert analyses that are being done, and that's why we're hearing from the chamber of commerce suggesting we delay the implementation of this bill—$300 million going out of the province to California with this cap-and-trade scheme, and $3 billion by 2030, per year. That $3 billion means that's money that we don't have for autism, that we don't have for our education system and that we don't have for health care.

I invite everybody in this House to speak to their constituents and the businesses in their constituencies and to really understand that it isn't something that we do without considering the consequences to future generations and to all of us here. We want to have the best quality of life for everybody in the province.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people I represent to offer a couple of thoughts about Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Certainly, there is no issue more critical than climate change to the future of our province, our country and our world, and no public policy debate more important than the one that we're currently having on how to transition to a low-carbon economy and how to reduce greenhouse gases.

As my colleagues and I in the New Democratic caucus have emphasized repeatedly, the way that we do that has to be fair, it has to be effective and it has to be transparent. There are a number of stakeholders who have highlighted the fact that carbon pricing has a disproportionate impact on low-income people because of the amount of their income that they spend on energy: on home heating and on gas for their vehicles. Many low-income people are renters. They have no ability to reduce emissions in the way that we have. They can't bring in energy efficiency upgrades. They have limited ability to

reduce their consumption. We have to ensure that there is mitigation to lessen the impact.

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We also have to ensure transparency. That's not just our concern; that is a concern that has been identified by the Financial Accountability Officer of this Legislature. There are currently no assurances that the revenues that are generated by this cap-and-trade scheme will be dedicated to climate change action. There is the possibility that these revenues could flow into the general revenues of the province, which would reduce severely the government's ability to actually have an impact on climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return back to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills to wrap up.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the member for Kenora–Rainy River, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member for Thornhill and the member for London West for responding to my comments this morning on this important bill. I also want to express my appreciation to my staff who have helped me prepare for this speech today, and who help me in my Queen's Park office. My assistant, Dan Roest, who is my legislative assistant, does a great job, and also we have a volunteer in our office this week and next week who is a recent graduate of the public affairs and policy management program at Carleton University with a specialization in international studies—he told me that yesterday. His name is Tim McIntosh. Together they did some of the research to help remind me of the current issues, and were instrumental in helping me get this most recent information from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to bring forward in the debate today.

In response to the statements that were made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I would say I agree that First Nations have obviously very, very significant interests in this issue and that we need to be cognizant of their concerns. In many cases they may be feeling the effects of climate change first, and most profoundly and immediately. I would acknowledge that and suggest that we need to ensure that we're in constant communication with our First Nation community leadership and ensuring that they are a big part of the plan in terms of response.

I would also add my disappointment in the fact that the minister, who is a minister of the crown, absolutely made no reference to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce letter that I read. I know that the government perhaps hasn't had a chance to respond. The letter is addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, but at the same time, the cabinet has to take these views into consideration. Again, I would encourage them to listen to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and one last push for my own idea of the Ontario green legacy program. I would urge the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of the Environment to get behind it and help me make this happen.

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

M^me^ France Gélinas: I too had a speech prepared, but because of the comments that were made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I want to share with him what this really looks like. I'm going to talk to all of us about Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami First Nation is a small First Nation in my riding, in the northeast part of the province. They are located on Lake Mattagami, which is just gorgeous, with beautiful beaches and lots of fishing. They have a hatchery, Speaker, and you may be interested that there are presently three million little pickerels being grown in the hatchery, right there at Mattagami, run by the Mattagami First Nation.

But as far as opportunities are concerned, except for tourism and campers, it's pretty limited. Mattagami is really, really close to Gogama, when you're talking about the north. It's still close to an hour's drive, but in northern Ontario those distances are close. They were also affected by the big train derailment.

But, coming back to cap-and-trade, they, like every First Nation, have a duty to protect Mother Earth. They take that duty really seriously. The elders at Mattagami really looked at what Mother Earth will look like seven generations from now.

Then comes a request for proposal from the IESO. They are looking for about 200 megawatts of power; 75 megawatts is to be from hydroelectricity.

Mattagami, like many other First Nations, has a hard time getting power. They are at the end of a line that barely meets their needs, which means that there are constant power failures, very frequent power failures. In previous months, I have read into the record the number of times and the length of time that the power has gone off.

The request for proposals came out. IESO wanted 75 megawatts of hydro power. They put forward a fairly robust proposal for six megawatts. I realize that six megawatts is not going to change much in the scheme of things, but six megawatts will mean that those constant power failures will be addressed. It will mean that people will have enough electricity to start to put businesses together.

I can give you some ideas. There was an idea for a greenhouse. It's really hard to get—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm just going to remind the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs that there's no food in the House.

I return to the member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Mattagami First Nation, as I said, has the hatchery, but they would like to diversify. They would like to bolster up their economies and have opportunities, but in order to do this, they need stable electricity.

Have no fear, Speaker: Everybody in that part of my riding all have generators, but generators that use gas will be taxed heavily with cap-and-trade, gasoline that we already pay way too much for—and I will go into this a little bit later in my talk.

Coming back to Mattagami's project: They answered the request for proposals from the IESO, putting forward their proposal for a six-megawatt project in partnership

with OPG. They get this letter back from the IESO that tells them there was not sufficient capacity in the northeast area to accommodate the renewable project. Is it just me who thinks it's a little bit weird that the IESO put out a request for proposals for that area, where we know there is lots of room on the grid because they are at the end of the grid and barely enough electricity makes it there, but they get an answer that says that there's not sufficient capacity on the grid?

Now, when we started to look into this, we realize that other people from southern Ontario have guaranteed access to the grid. Those people will never come to Mattagami. Those people will never set up a six-megawatt program on a First Nation to make sure that this First Nation has reliable electricity, but that doesn't matter. Part of the grid is reserved for big promises that have been made to big companies at the expense of First Nations, who need reliable electricity, just like the rest of us need reliable electricity. This boggles the mind.

We have the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs who stands up and says that everywhere he goes, First Nations talk about climate change. I agree with him; they do. They don't use that language, but basically they want to protect Mother Earth for generations to come. Their elders at Mattagami had supported this green energy project, basically because it was going to help Mattagami have stable access to reliable electricity. It would decrease their dependency on generators, which use a ton of gasoline and produce a ton of pollution. They know there is room on the grid and they are turned down by the IESO because of promises made to other people to gain access to the grid, while the people who are right here and want access to the grid cannot get it.

This is wrong. This is depriving this First Nation of economic opportunity. They had already started to have one of their members at the college in Timmins start to learn so that they would be ready for those jobs once the project was going to be built.

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I will put into the record that Mr. Kamil Mina basically would like to have greenhouses so that the people of the northeast can grow some of their own fresh fruits and vegetables and, here again, fight climate change so that we don't have to import all of our vegetables from down south. Why not produce some up north? The answer is quite simple. We don't produce them up north because to heat the greenhouses would cost so much when you pay for diesel fuel and gas fuel to fuel generators. But once you have a run-of-the-river electrical project—six megawatts—that would be perfect. That would have all the electricity needed so that we could make sure that the hatchery doesn't run out of power in the worst of times and you lose three million little baby pickerel. You would make sure that some of the spinoff industry has a chance.

I'm going to read Kamil Mina's letter into the record. It goes as follows:

"Farming is the 'green mining' of all times and is one of the most sustainable professions throughout history.

"Water and fertile soil are available in northern Ontario. However, air becomes colder for almost 240 days of heating during a typical year. The conventional solution was to grow food in all-glass greenhouses, but owners realized heating cost becomes a barrier for a sustainable business."

That's where we make the link to having this six megawatts of green energy from Mattagami First Nation, which would solve this problem.

The motivation behind designing and building an energy-efficient greenhouse includes the following:

(1) It would create production-type job opportunities for farmers, which they call greenhouse operators, to grow year-round local food, including vegetables and fruits, and also raise other small farm animals, such as chickens and rabbits, and eggs.

(2) It would create service-type job opportunities for electricians, HVAC technicians, builders and concrete form technicians to build these energy-efficient greenhouses.

(3) It would improve food security to ensure food is produced and consumed locally, with the option of exporting to other cities and locations, which is expected to generate revenue for the community.

(4) It would create independence in food production, where the community manages its own food production, processing and disposal.

(5) It would initiate other food-related industries, including food processing, packaging, transportation—all this on a local scale—distribution and waste disposal.

(6) Environmental benefits—where the greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, with the elimination of long-distance transportation to bring food.

(7) Other environmental benefits include a controlled environment, where there are no insects or small animals and birds that are allowed to enter, and no runoff of fertilizer or nitrogen compounds that are allowed to leave the greenhouse.

(8) They saw this as an educational benefit, where there could be a one-year program offered at community colleges. The college that was interested in that was Cambrian College in Sudbury. They would help students learn hands-on activities related to sustainable farming. Besides the understanding of concepts and theories behind these activities, graduates of those courses would be called greenhouse operators and they would get a certificate.

(9) They would develop year-round food production for the community.

(10) That would lead to lower food prices, as energy prices are reduced. Energy prices are due to heating, ventilation, lighting and transportation over long distances, where the Mattagami First Nation could supply that electricity.

I wanted to put that into the record because it's all inter-linked. People in northern Ontario—I've run out of time, eh? Thank you, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a large group from Community Living Tillsonburg who are in here the Legislature today. In the gallery are Doug Cooper, Michael Kadey, Steven Hoffman, Della Derrough, Sandra Bray, Matt Hoogsteen, Shannon Schooley, Frank Benke, Bonnie Edwards, Jeanette Branton, Don Skiba, Rose Henry, Bryon Crossett, Kerry Schram, Connie Shuga, Jen Vandewalle, Crystal Saunders and Marty Graf. I want to welcome them here to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today is Community Living Ontario Day in the Legislature, and we will shortly be joined by the executive director, Chris Beesley, president Hélène Morin-Chain, and Ron Laroche, all from Community Living Ontario.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to welcome everybody who is here for Community Living Day. This morning, I was pleased to meet with all the members that the minister mentioned, plus the director of policy, Gordon Kyle.

Miss Monique Taylor: On behalf of the member from Welland, I would like to introduce some folks who are here today from Community Living: Kerry Thomas, David Middleton, John Smith, Justin Marr and Dale Sheets. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome two interns from my office, Olivia Eng and Johnathan Wilkinson. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We have a page here representing Wellington–Halton Hills. Her name is Samantha McPherson. She's doing a great job. Her grandmother, Carolyn McPherson, is here as well as her grandfather, Dave Comfort. I want to welcome them as well to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to introduce my friend and colleague in the Scarborough–Agincourt area, Councillor Jim Karygiannis, from the city of Toronto, who is visiting us today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to the House today the members from Walkerton Community Living, who are celebrating their 60th anniversary later this year: Linda Batte, Harry Woodward and Marion Last. They're travelling with Carol Patterson.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome my friend the president and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Ian McLean, to Queen's Park today. He's not in the chamber, but we'll be meeting with him and the Toronto Board of Trade later on today.

M^me^ Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'accueillir dans la Chambre des membres du réseau de développement économique de l'Ontario : Annick Schulz, Denis Laframboise, Pierre Tessier, Alain Brosius et Annie Dell. Bienvenue.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the Legislature Mr. Naushad Jamani, who is a vice-president of Nova Chemicals, olefins division. Joining him is Ken Faulkner, government relations director, Nova Chemicals. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am honoured to welcome Nicky Jones, Jennifer Matthews, Samantha Murduff, Jennifer Mackay, Joe Crooks and Amanda Robinson from Community Living Durham North, who are here today. Welcome.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm not sure if they're in the gallery yet, but I'd like to welcome all the wonderful public elementary school teachers from Lambton Kent District School Board and the Thames Valley District School Board. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the parents of today's page captain, Julia Melino—who is from my riding of Vaughan—here with us today. Ada and Dominic Melino are here with us in the gallery. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome Hélène Morin-Chain from the North Bay Community Living, who I met with earlier today.

As well, I'd like to introduce, from the Near North District School Board, Judith Arai and Jan Heinonen.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I was unable to make the ETFO breakfast this morning, but I know we have two members of ETFO from Thunder Bay here today. I think they're in the Legislature somewhere. I'd like to welcome a president at ETFO, Mike Judge, and the occasional teacher representative, Nancy Nix, both from ETFO.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Henry Boyd and Dave Burns from the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. We had a great meeting this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd like to welcome Beaches–East York constituents Stewart Carley, his partner, Bill Polski, and their good friend Gord Hardy to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome today Don Seymour, the executive director from Addiction and Mental Health Services in Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington; and also, Debi Wells and Mike Lumb from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Greg Weiler, president of ETFO for Waterloo region, and Nathan Core and Jenn Wallage, also from ETFO.

Mr. Yvan Baker: On behalf of my colleague Chris Ballard, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, I'd like to welcome three of his constituents: Ruth Groves, who's a community development and campaign director with Community Living, and Andrea Sager and Emily Wierenga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome the folks from Community Living Campbellford/Brighton who are here today, and also welcome Dave Henderson from the Hastings and Prince Edward federation; Doug Thur, also

from Hastings and Prince Edward; and from Kawartha Pine Ridge, Shirley Bell and Marsha Jones.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome to the House Margaret MacFarlane, president of ETFO Halton; and also Al Bero, president of ETFO Halton occasional teacher local; and Amy Korzack, who is with ETFO Halton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following ETFO leaders who represent teachers and early childhood educators who work and live in my riding of Davenport: Karen Brown Campbell, John Smith, Andy Lomnicki, Rob Fulford and Diego Olmedo. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I welcome all our guests.

We have in the Speaker's gallery today special guests: Mr. Pieter De Crem, the state secretary for foreign trade of Belgium. Mr. De Crem is accompanied by His Excellency Raoul Delcorde, the ambassador of Belgium to Canada, and—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —if I may, the rest of the staff.

On behalf of all members of this House, I express our sorrow and our outrage over the recent terrorist attacks in Belgium, and convey our love and support to the Belgian people. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today I was saddened to read about the passing of Sharon Shamblaw. She recently lost her battle with cancer. As the London Free Press put it, "Her death came after long bureaucratic delays in approving a potentially life-saving bone marrow transplant in Buffalo, NY." This is after Ontario did not have the capacity to meet the demand for transplants. As Ms. Shamblaw's daughter said, "It was a matter of a week and she would have had a fighting shot."

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Shamblaw deserved that fighting shot. It's too late for Ms. Shamblaw, but will this government promise that not one more life will be lost because of bureaucratic red tape and delays waiting for transplants?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, let me express my sincere condolences to the family of Mrs. Shamblaw. It's totally unacceptable to me that patients in this province should have to wait unacceptably long times for life-saving procedures such as stem cell transplants. It was, regrettably, because of situations like the one experienced by this family that I was alerted to some of the challenges that we have in this province with regard to stem cell transplants. We, of course, announced additional funding in our budget to increase the capacity. We have already made some progress in reducing wait times. We've invested up to $100 million for out-of-country care.

1040

I know that this is too late for this family and this remarkable individual—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: The government may say it's unacceptable, but this just happened. It just happened. This is your health ministry. This is your government's responsibility.

I learned that by the time the Buffalo transplant was approved by government officials and final tests were done, Ms. Shamblaw's cancer, which was in remission, had returned, meaning the transplant was cancelled. It was decided the transplant was necessary, but it took 130 days to have the transplant approved: 130 days for a medically necessary transplant.

Here is the question that Ms. Shamblaw's daughter asked. She asked it to the London media, and I'm going to raise it here today to the government. She asked, "You wouldn't make somebody with a gunshot wound wait for surgery. Why are ... people waiting for transplants?" Why does Ontario not have the capacity to treat its own patients?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, we're investing an additional $30 million in increasing the capacity across the province. We're strengthening the network, the three sites across this province in Hamilton, in Toronto and in Ottawa, that provide that support; there is a $100-million fund for out-of-country. We have recently, in fact, changed the guidelines where even those who have relapsed with their cancer will be eligible for both in-province and out-of-province care. We're funding for a caregiver out of country to be provided alongside the transplant support. We've increased our funding for allogeneic stem cell transplants in this province by some 600% over the last number of years. The capacity at locations like Mount Sinai has gone up by 25% in the last year. We're making other changes to make sure that this lifesaving procedure is available.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: This happened in your city. This happened in London. It is happening across Ontario, and the government can say all their talking points they like. It's not good enough. This happened in Ontario. As Ms. Shamblaw's daughter Amanda said, "Things need to change."

The status quo doesn't work in Ontario. Things absolutely have to change. Saying what you did 15 years ago or 10 years ago or five years ago isn't good enough. A life was at risk here. We don't need focus groups; we don't need panels or more bureaucracy. We need investment in patients. We need action before one more life is lost.

What will the government do to ensure another family doesn't have to go through what the Shamblaw family had to endure?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, it is because I see this as unacceptable that we have acted. We acted in the budget with the $30 million. We're adding a fourth site for stem cell transplants here in Toronto at Sunnybrook Hospital. We are changing the rules surrounding out-of-country care as well, and the options available for individuals on wait-lists in this province.

But the Leader of the Opposition needs to acknowledge and know as well that this is a procedure that, over recent years, has become available and become an option for many, many more people than previously it would have been available for.

That's not an excuse for inaction. I have created a task force of clinical experts to do everything humanly possible to continue to reduce those wait times, to make sure that out-of-country is a viable option and provide the services that individuals in this province do deserve.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Because this government has been signing contracts for power that we don't need, Ontario has lost over $3.5 billion in power to other jurisdictions. We are subsidizing New York and Michigan, who gladly take our power for pennies on the dollar.

When did Ontario's energy minister become the economic development minister for New York state? When did the Premier become the economic development minister for Michigan? Because that's the effect of this government's disastrous energy policies.

Why should Ontario's businesses and families be subsidizing our competition in New York and Michigan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Of course, that party was in power for a number of years, and the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —the Minister of Energy of the day was the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean.

Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a list in my head and I'm going to go through it, but if you want to keep adding your name, carry on.

The member from Simcoe–Grey, come to order; the member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order; the member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order; and the deputy House leader, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On December 11, 2001, the then-Minister of Energy said, with respect to import/export of power, "Any power we sell to the US, to Quebec, to Manitoba, or power they sell us, is surplus power. It's opportunity power. It's pure profit, in terms that it's power that otherwise"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to be insistent. If it continues to happen and if I hear members' names other than their riding or their title, I'll start putting you on the list. It stops. Raise the level of respect, please.

You have one wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there's a trade in electricity among jurisdictions. The IESO will confirm that, last year, we made a net profit of $350 million—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, and if you'd like to try it again, you'll get a second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: Although it's humorous to hear the Minister of Energy try to explain why he is subsidizing businesses in New York and Michigan at the expense of Ontario, the reality is that the Premier is in Timmins today. In Timmins, the Premier is going to get an earful from municipal leaders who passed a resolution, saying that this government's energy policies are disastrous in northern Ontario.

There is no doubt that she is hearing story after story about how out-of-control hydro rates have hurt businesses and families in northern Ontario. I'm sure that she will hear many people tell her how they were in disbelief—utter disbelief—when the Minister of Finance had the audacity to say that hydro rates were going down.

Will the government be making an announcement today in Timmins that, for hydro rates, there will be some relief for struggling northern communities? Or is today's trip simply another photo op?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The level of understanding of the electricity sector by the Leader of the Opposition leaves a lot to be desired. Little does he know that for the industrial rates—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Little does he know that the electricity rates for industrial customers in northern Ontario are among the lowest in North America. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll do this all day.

The member from Nepean–Carleton, second time; Leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I was in Timmins several weeks ago to announce a program under the IEI Program, where the benefit went to two mining companies. They saved millions of dollars by participating in

the IEI Program. The CEO of one of those was very, very congratulatory of our energy policies in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary: the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Minister of Energy: I know that it's highly unlikely that the minister will answer my question, but I do expect his response to be truthful and honest. As constituents of mine, the Koeslags have a cottage which is unused in the winter. Yet on April 3, 7 and 13 this year, they received three different hydro bills. One was for $112 for no power. One was for $116 for no power used. Both were estimates; however, their final bill was their actual bill. They used 20 cents of electricity, but the total cost had now jumped to $137. Three different bills; three different costs.

1050

Speaker, will the minister tell us which other province charges $137 to deliver 20 cents of electricity and takes three times to get it right?

Interjections.

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

Before I turn to the minister, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order. I have a good memory.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bob, you're going to change the name to "Hydro Three."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. You can count all you want. I can jump to a warning. I can jump to naming, too. It's my call, not yours.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to acknowledge that out of 4.6 million customers who are on the smart meters, and who are metered and who receive bills in that manner, there will be some cases where there are errors.

The member should know that Hydro One has a dedicated telephone line for members of provincial Parliament to call with specific questions where they have bills that appear to be not in accordance with what you might expect, Mr. Speaker. We also have a new Ombudsman who is available.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the customer complaint service has improved dramatically at Hydro One. The stats will show that 90% of all—

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

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. As we all know, Ontario is growing. There are nearly 14 million people who call Ontario home. In fact, there are 100,000 more people who live in Ontario today than this same time last year.

Peel is a perfect example of growth. We have record growth in Peel; however, funding across Ontario is not keeping up with inflation, nor is it keeping up with population growth.

Will the government do the right thing and ensure that hospital funding keeps up with both population growth as well as inflation?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the third party knows by now that we've increased our health care budget by approximately 2% this year in the recently passed budget. Of that, nearly a third, $345 million—in fact, the member from Renfrew just—I've obviously said it enough times that it has sunk in: more than a 2% investment in our hospitals on the operating side, which is quite separate, of course, from the capital investments; the $12 billion over the next 10 years; the $50 million of additional monies that we put into the renovations and the maintenance that are required by our hospitals each and every year. But $345 million, a 2.1% increase in the line item, will do a lot of things for our hospitals—not just base funding, but it also will continue to reduce those wait times that were among the best in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Listen: Communities across Ontario are growing, and funding isn't keeping up with that growth.

On top of that, the costs they face are going up, from medication to hydro bills. Those are going up with inflation, and funding is not keeping up with that. When costs go up and funding doesn't, that's a cut.

The government can deny it all they want, but the people see it when they go to hospitals and see that they're waiting longer for services. They see it when they're seeing services cut out of their communities. The government can deny it all they want, but can they take the first step towards fixing this problem and admit that they're cutting hospital services in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we aren't cutting services. Unlike the NDP when they were in government, who closed 24% of all the acute hospital beds in the province and closed 13% of all the mental health beds, we're not doing that. We are maintaining and, in fact, improving services.

In fact, the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, ICES, reviewed what has resulted because of our funding changes, our focus on quality and our health system funding reform. They found, indeed, that the number of patients being seen has increased. They're seeing the same or improved outcomes. They're seeing that the readmission rates are remaining the same, but they're seeing, importantly, that for things like urinary tract infections, pressure sores, falls and pneumonia, those important things that can happen in hospitals, we've seen improvements. The rates of those important indicators are going down.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There's something very strange going on with the Liberals, and I think it requires a translator. So I'm going to do my best to translate for them:

"Optimizing an asset" translates to selling off an asset. "Open and transparent government"—that's another good one—actually translates to making legislation in secret and deleting government records. The newest one, though, is the best one: "Transformation in health care" actually translates to firing nurses and cutting services in health care.

Interjection: You need a code book.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's the code book. That's the translation for the actual things that are going on.

Will the government admit that their plan for hospitals in Ontario just means less care for patients?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, talk about spin, Mr. Speaker.

The budget for the William Osler hospital in Brampton this year is going up by an additional $8.2 million. A little bit further to the west, Hamilton Health Sciences: Their budget is going up by $10.4 million. All across the province, as a result of a budget which they voted against, which resulted in a billion more dollars being spent on health care and a third of that being spent specifically on our hospital operating budgets—they voted against that, but we're beginning to see the positive impact. They don't have to believe the government when we say the facts about 3,000 more nurses employed last year—an additional almost 8,000 nurses employed in our hospital sector over the last five years. That's the College of Nurses of Ontario that is stating that fact.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Acting Premier again. The minister brought up health care in London. Let's talk about London: St. Joseph's Health Care London saw its budget cut by $8.5 million. Over the last four years, because of inflation, the costs have gone up by $7 million a year. That means, over four years, they've had to cut $36.5 million from hospital care in London. Next year, they're going to face a $17-million gap in funding. They're being forced to cut 60 positions and 12 beds.

That announcement came after the Liberal budget. Will the government stop cutting health services in London and across the province?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud of the work that is being done in London, including at the London Health Sciences Centre—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And St. Joe's.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —and, the member from London has just reminded me, at St. Joe's as well.

London Health Sciences will be seeing, this year, an increase of $8.5 million to their budget. St. Joe's, this year, will see an increase in their operating budget of $2.3 million. So perhaps the member opposite needs to actually go and talk to the administration at the hospital and talk to the CFOs to have an understanding of how we're continuing to invest in our hospitals, whether for reducing the wait times in important facilities like the London Health Sciences or at St. Joe's. But the funding to London has increased since we have come into office. At London Health Sciences: a 69% increase in their budget since 2003.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's very interesting. We've spoken to and we've heard from London Health Sciences. Weeks after the Liberal budget, London Health Sciences said they would have to cut $20 million from their budget. So that just doesn't add up. This is in the hometown of the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier, the head of the Treasury Board, who makes the funding decisions in Ontario, is cutting hospital care in London. It's being cut at London Health Sciences; it's being cut at St. Joseph's.

1100

Calling a cut a transformation may sound good in a Liberal press release, but a cut is still a cut. Will the government stop cutting health care and health services in London and across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, a billion dollars more into our health care system, and the third party voted against that increase; $345 million more in our hospitals, and the NDP voted against that. Of course, in their last election campaign, they actually wanted to cut an additional $600 million from health care and education. I just can't understand how, on a platform like that, when we know that would have resulted in thousands of cuts, in drastic, draconian cuts to health care across this province—it really would have taken us back to the mid-1990s, when they closed all those hospital beds, when they fired 3,000 registered nurses, when they closed the mental health beds, when they cut funding to hospitals and cut funding to health care. We don't want to go back to that era.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I don't think the people of Ontario appreciate, when we talk about cuts that are impacting them today, talking about what happened 25 years ago. But it's fine; if you think that's going to help your case, so be it.

The government's cuts have real impacts. People in London are being treated in hospital conference rooms. People have had to sleep on the ER floor. When hospital funding doesn't keep up, this is what happens. Will the government acknowledge that they're cutting services, that they're cutting health care in this province, and admit, first of all, to this cut, and then stop doing this and stop cutting health care services in our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are so deeply committed to improving the quality of health care for Ontarians and the positive outcomes that they've come to expect out of the health care system. We're number one in almost every single indicator for wait times—the shortest wait times across the country. We have accommodated an increas-

ing population, but we're still seeing those positive outcomes—the reductions in readmission rates, the reductions in infections and things like falls and pneumonia, those important elements to a patient's experience in the hospital environment. Those are decreasing.

The outcomes are what we should be focused on, and on so many measures across the province, we're seeing improvements. We're seeing reductions in the average length of stay for both medical and surgical admissions. We're seeing that partly because we're moving more care out into the community, into home care, into community care where people, quite frankly, would prefer to have it.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of the Environment this morning. A few weeks ago, at his Economic Club speech, the minister continued to make uninformed comments about Ontario's future. He stated that he wants to remove natural gas from all Ontario homes and businesses, even though it will help produce skyrocketing hydro rates for those customers.

The industry and constituents are wondering if the minister truly thinks there's no place for natural gas in Ontario's homes and businesses. Why does the minister want to cancel plans to expand natural gas access to Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As the member knows, I am sure, 35% of our emissions come from transportation from vehicles and 20% of our emissions come from buildings, and that's entirely natural gas. So we are working with Enbridge, with Union Gas, with the geothermal sector to improve the efficiency and, where we have better and more affordable technology for Ontarians, to switch those out.

I met with Al Monaco, the president of Enbridge, for over an hour. They are very engaged in recognizing that home heating in the future is going to have to come from sources other than natural gas. Natural gas is very important to rural Ontario for many industrial and commercial farm uses, and we have no intention of abandoning or reducing those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: He did mention the greenhouse gases, so he could pick up my bill, Bill 76, on the reduction of greenhouse gases if he wanted to.

The Premier put natural gas expansion in the mandate letters for the Ministers of Economic Development and also Energy. She put up $230 million in grants and loans for natural gas expansion in her budget, but the Minister of the Environment seems to not agree that natural gas should be in homes or businesses in southwestern Ontario, or all of Ontario, as far as that goes.

Will the minister tell us who is wrong: him or the Premier?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a commitment that I and all of my colleagues in government support. We do not see any contradiction at all between reducing greenhouse gas emissions—and as a matter of fact, the member knows, because you and I have spoken personally about this, and I very much support your bill—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and I have on several occasions offered my personal support. So I am surprised to hear that you would characterize—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —the many conversations that you and I have had personally about supporting your bill as somehow a lack of support. I'm not sure what you thought the content of that conversation was about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the third time, address the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't a mutually exclusive thing. In Toronto, where I live, my building and others in my neighbourhood don't need to be running on natural gas. Those of us in the city can do things that folks in rural Ontario can't do. When you have an all-of-Ontario, Ontario-first approach, you allow us to solve these problems.

I don't need to drive a minivan. Some of my friends in the suburbs—

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

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Organizations like Quickstart, who were at first supportive of the new autism plan, have now come out sounding the alarms. From the media release: "Quickstart does not support the removal of any child from the intensive therapy wait-list. These children and their parents have been waiting years for intensive therapy and they should receive it...."

It's looking more and more like the only people not in opposition to this plan are the Liberals—experts, teachers, schools, parents, advocacy organizations, the provincial advocate, newspaper editorial boards and children themselves.

Deputy Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you ensure that kids over five are not removed from the IBI wait-list?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think there are some things we can agree on. In all of our conversations on this side of the House or opposite, in meeting with the autism parent groups, the autism coalition, ONTABA, the behaviour analysis group, parents and so on—and, yes, the youth themselves, which is very important—I think everyone agrees on some things, and they are as follows: It's unacceptable to leave these children on wait-lists for years. It's unacceptable for them not to be in service. That's exactly why we're investing $333 million, on top of the $190 million a year, for this program and creating 16,000 new spaces.

It is important that we listen to all the voices. The Premier has been doing that. I've been doing it. Many

members of this House have been doing that. We appreciate the input.

I look forward to a successful implementation where all families feel well supported and individual children's needs are met.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: To the Deputy Premier: Families are tired of hearing the Premier and the minister saying that it's either this new plan or kids are going to be forced to wait on the wait-list. That's simply not true. This is about priorities. With the proper investment, this government could give all kids access to the intensive services they need.

It's time to make this about children and not just about wait-lists. It's time for this government to do the right thing. Municipalities have started passing resolutions urging this government to do the right thing and not force children over five off the IBI list.

Will the Deputy Premier listen? Will she do the right thing? Please don't remove these kids from the therapy that they so desperately need.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think another thing we can agree on is that it is the clinicians and the doctors and the experts who make decisions about the right kind of treatment for each individual child.

Children who are currently receiving IBI will continue to receive IBI. They will be assessed at their six-month window, as they always are, and at that point the clinician will decide on the intensity of the services going forward. Depending on where that child or youth is in the spectrum, they will get the intensity of the service they need. They may need to continue on IBI for a while. They may transition to the new, expanded program. The decision is guided by experts.

Those families can and will be supported by the service providers and my ministry.

1110

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Speaker, investing in research excellence and supporting an innovative, knowledge-based economy are key activities to supporting discoveries that bring tangible benefits to Ontarians and position Ontario as a leader in research commercialization. The difference between thriving and merely surviving in this competitive global economy is the priority we place on knowledge, creativity and innovation and how we bring these innovations to market.

I know the residents of Beaches–East York would appreciate hearing more about what this government is doing to support research and innovation in Ontario. Would the minister please inform the members of the House and cite recent examples that demonstrate how Ontario is supporting the many opportunities in this area of advanced technology and entrepreneurship, bringing Ontario into the 21st century?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for that question.

This government has been and always will be dedicated to making sure that our province of Ontario is a global leader in research and innovation.

On Monday, Premier Wynne spoke at the annual Discovery conference in Toronto, and I had the opportunity to address about 3,000 delegates from all over the world on Tuesday.

Our government knows that if you want to commercialize good ideas, you need to offer a flexible network of support to our start-up companies and through an innovation continuum. That's what we are doing through our world-class post-secondary education system, through support to organizations like the Ontario Centres of Excellence, and by instilling a culture of innovation at all levels of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the Ontario Centres of Excellence. They have put our province of Ontario and the city of Toronto on the map.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the Minister of Research and Innovation for that answer and for the great work he is doing to foster innovation in Ontario.

I know that Ontario continues to support good jobs in emerging—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough.

Finish, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I know that Ontario continues to support good jobs in emerging sectors and in the knowledge-based economy. For example, we are now the top-performing province in Canada when it comes to innovation commercialization, and we are fifth globally. We feature an increasingly robust risk capital market that is such a critical part of growing early stage companies into high-growth, export-oriented firms. We are already second to Silicon Valley in the number of information and communication technology jobs and companies.

The people of Beaches–East York want to know how our government is continuing to introduce cutting-edge, strategic programs. Would the minister address some of the most recent programs our government has introduced to achieve this goal?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. I want to assure the House that, despite our progress on various fronts in research and innovation and the commercialization of research, we know there's so much work to do to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in our province and in the competitive global economy.

We just launched the $400-million Business Growth Initiative as part of our 2016 budget, which will help our small companies scale up and grow; accelerate our investments to kick-start an innovation-driven economy; and modernize our regulatory system to make it smarter and cut needless red tape.

Our Green Investment Fund, in the amount of a $325-million down payment on the province's cap-and-trade program, thanks to the Minister of the Environment and

Climate Change, will help us tackle climate change and support good jobs and grow our economy.

Our government is committed to helping our—

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

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the environment minister. The Liberals are in such a hurry to take more money out of the pockets of Ontario businesses and hard-working taxpayers that they haven't even considered the economic impact of their reckless cap-and-tax scheme.

For nearly a year, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been pleading with the government to release its economic analysis, but the minister refuses to disclose any details whatsoever. The only information we have is from a candid moment with the minister last month when he said his cap-and-tax scheme is "going to cost the private sector."

Will the minister listen to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and reveal how much this scheme is going to cost business?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In the business sector, we will see billions of dollars going into every single heavy industrial manufacturing sector. We've been working with Mr. Allan O'Dette today. We actually have already started investing. We have a great program, well-supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, called the smart green program, which is already funded and in which they are taking a leadership role in preparing industry and small business for a low-carbon economy. We have been meeting and consulting for two years, almost on a weekly basis, with business and industry.

Every question that Mr. O'Dette puts in his letter is a question that needs to be answered, and they'll be answered in the action plan in a few weeks. He raises the issue of offsets. As you know, as members know, we have a joint procurement right now with Quebec, setting a Quebec-Ontario offset protocol of which Mr. O'Dette and others will be very involved in writing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again to the minister: It's ridiculous to think the minister has no clue how much the Liberals' reckless cap-and-tax scheme is going to cost Ontario businesses. What's worse is that the minister routinely admits this tax scheme will lead to even more job losses. Of course, once again, he won't say how much. But Ontario businesses want to know the truth, and that truth is that this tax scheme will hurt our economy. That's why the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has called for the government to hit the pause button.

In the interests of protecting our economy, will the minister agree to the request made by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to delay the start date for the cap-and-trade program until 2018?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Further delays or delays, period, would mean that the cost of the transition to Ontario businesses would be much higher.

But let's just pause for a second, because what is the opposition proposing? They are suggesting to us, as the government, that it should be revenue-neutral, which would mean that there would be absolutely zero programs and zero funding to manage a transition to a low-carbon economy. There would also be capital outflow because we would not be able to leverage private sector dollars, which seems to be a concern of theirs, yet they have no answer to it.

The most troubling part of their position is that they want to de-link and not link with California and Quebec, which means that the price of carbon per tonne in Ontario would be astronomical and explosive and unaffordable for business.

They have no numbers backing up any of these, but we have been giving lots of numbers, and when the action plan comes out in a few weeks—a little patience—you'll see all of the modelling that you would need to see on this. We will continue to work with Mr. O'Dette and our friends there—

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

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, through you to the Deputy Premier: The NDP has long supported a cap-and-trade program that is fair, effective and transparent. Unfortunately, government members repeatedly voted down NDP amendments to strengthen their cap-and-trade bill, including one to give the Financial Accountability Officer access to the documents that would verify the effectiveness of the government's climate change initiatives.

The member from Beaches–East York then tabled a much weaker amendment, telling us, "From our discussions with the Financial Accountability Office, this is what they are looking for." On Tuesday, the FAO said the member from Beaches–East York had misrepresented his opinion. It was not what they were looking for.

Why is the government misrepresenting the transparency of its cap-and-trade bill?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw because you can't say indirectly what you're implying directly. So I'm going to ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I do just want to preface my remarks by the incredibly constructive role that the member for Toronto–Danforth has taken in this. I really want to commend him and commend his party for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, we actually—

Interjections.

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

The member from Huron–Bruce, second time, and you might get the warning if you want it. Just ask and I'll give it to you right away.

Finish, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you remember that.

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I share the concern you have. This is a legal, constitutional, cabinet confidentiality issue. There are restrictions on access to government, and we have this often with table officers in the Parliament. My deputy is working quite carefully right now and very closely with the parliamentary budget officer, looking at different pathways, within the legal advice that we've gotten from the ministry and from the Attorney General's office on limitations of access and the points of access.

It is not a concern that's lost on us. We are continuing to work with him, but we are constrained by some legal opinions we have which we're trying to resolve.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government promised that cap-and-trade funds would be spent transparently and effectively. This was something the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, amongst others, asked for. But then the government voted against nearly every NDP amendment that would ensure this.

For example, we don't know if cap-and-trade funds will be spent only on new programs to reduce greenhouse gases. The government voted against an NDP amendment that would have made sure of this. As it is, the government can basically spend the cap-and-trade money on virtually anything it wants, including deficit reduction.

Will the government keep its own transparency promises, starting by giving the FAO access to all the documents that he requests?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to assure the member that I will work to ensure that, within the legal constraints and the rules that govern this Legislature and cabinet, we get to him as much information as is humanly possible. I totally agree with the principle you're saying.

A government motion included an amendment that would inform the public of which entities have received free allowances and how they were received, which was asked for at committee.

We agreed with an NDP motion changing the reporting to every year from every five years, which aligns with the fact that I have to submit an expenditure plan and investment plan every single year and will report every single year—that a report on the minister's evaluation to Treasury Board be included in the annual report and given to the FAO.

Another motion at committee sets a time requirement for the release of the annual report at the same time as the public accounts on the greenhouse gas reduction account.

I mentioned, the last time I spoke, a number of other measures.

We already have the highest standard in transparency. I agree with the member's objective. I will work with him—

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

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. In my riding, I hear from constituents, up to last Saturday, on the work of this government on the energy file. The constituents of Durham know how critical a clean, reliable energy system is to Ontario being a great place to live and work.

Wherever I go, I am proud to speak about the achievements we have made on our energy file. I tell constituents about $4.4 billion in health and environmental costs that we're avoiding each year by completely ending the use of coal generation in Ontario. I speak about the smart investment in the nuclear industry and how this clean, safe energy source has brought significant economic benefits.

Minister, could you please tell the House what feedback you have received on the recent investments that our government has made?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. There's a lot of good news that needs to be shared about energy in Ontario.

As announced this past December and January, Ontario Power Generation and Bruce Power will be refurbishing the nuclear reactors at Darlington and Bruce, securing 10,000 megawatts of affordable, reliable and emissions-free power.

The Conservative critic, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, agrees. He said that "the recent agreement between Ontario and Bruce Power—to enable the refurbishment of the remaining six reactors at Bruce—certainly appears to be a good one.... The refurbishment agreement ensures we will have a stable supply of reliable, emission-free power for the next 60 years."

And "ratepayers will benefit from the ... refurbishment because it will result in the province continuing to use nuclear as a source of reliable, cost-effective and emission-free source of electricity."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Since the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station is in the great riding of Durham, the economic and job creation benefits are also well celebrated by my constituents. Darlington's nuclear refurbishment project will contribute $15 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product and create up to 11,800 new jobs annually. The Bruce refurbishment project will generate 23,000 jobs and generate $6.3 million in annual economic benefits in communities throughout our great province.

Minister, there have been concerns raised on the cost of these refurbishments. To quote the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: "Even though the PC caucus supports the refurbishment plan of the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, we hope the Wynne government has done its due diligence to mitigate any cost overruns that would affect Ontario taxpayers."

Minister, could you please explain what precautions are in place to ensure these projects meet their—

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

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to reassure the member from Pembroke-Renfrew. The nuclear refurbishment contracts are designed to protect the interests of Ontarians. The Darlington refurbishment schedule will only proceed after the successful completion of the first of four units. We have built appropriate off-ramps, should operators be unable to deliver the projects on schedule—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and on budget, and enlisted an independent oversight adviser—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —to monitor progress and spending. Also, the Bruce Power contracts ensures Bruce Power—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. I'll pick you off one at a time: the member from Nipissing, second time; the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time. It's never too late to get named.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, it's never too late for the opposition to hear good news. Also, the Bruce Power contract ensures Bruce Power assumes full execution risk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

Answer.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —for any potential cost overruns or delays. Ontario has more than 180 companies across the province directly linked to the nuclear supply chain benefiting all Ontarians, and nuclear will remain—

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

New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. There's a wind energy project that is under appeal in the city of Kawartha Lakes, near Bethany. After going through a time-consuming and expensive process with the Environmental Review Tribunal, now the Snowy Ridge project's footprint is growing larger than what was already approved by this tribunal and the Ministry of the Environment. This expansion, however, did not have any public review or input. The modification report is 165 pages and the late expansion raises questions as to whether the company was working in good faith with the ministry and the tribunal.

Does the minister believe it is appropriate for the government to approve a project that puts out inaccurate and incomplete information?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As I said to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, whom I've been working with on his private member's bill, I would be very happy to meet with you to go through it, talk about it and figure it out. I have to be very clear here. As some of the members opposite know, I play a different role, because these decisions are appealable to the Environmental Review Tribunal and some of them are appealable to me. I'm limited in what I can say because of my role in the adjudication process.

I'm very concerned about what the member has raised. If she talks to some of her colleagues, she'll know that in similar situations I've worked with them through this. I will make my ministry available. I will review it and I will also make sure that her constituents know of their appeal option.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I appreciate what the minister said. There was a letter sent on April 25. They did ask you for a stay, which they were not granted.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shame on you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You have to acknowledge that the expansion of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron–Bruce is warned.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —the Snowy Ridge project will include work in the Oak Ridges moraine. I don't want you to miss that: It's work in the Oak Ridges moraine. The PC government took steps to protect that environmentally sensitive moraine.

Interjection: Ah.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Ah, we did. But you are disregarding this, completely disregarding it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will address the Chair, please.

1130

Ms. Laurie Scott: You are welcoming expansive and sky-high wind turbines. The project's collector line will also go through compensation habitat for species at risk and cause potential irreversible damage to surrounding wildlife.

Why is the minister allowing industrial wind projects in protected areas like the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in the one minute that I have to answer, it's hard to address the complexity. But I do want to just note that the member from Huron–Bruce—her heckle suggesting what I do would actually break the law. If she's going to be the environment critic, she should understand the basic Environmental Review Tribunal process.

But what I can do, Mr. Speaker, is I can work with the member—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What I can do is I can take some time—and maybe I should include my critic in the briefing—on what the rules and rights are for citizens, how the Environmental Review Tribunal works and what they can do. I very sincerely think that we have to protect the interests of citizens and communities in this.

If we can set aside partisan politics, I will work with you on that. I appreciate you raising an issue of such great concern to your constituents.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The people of the James Bay coast, including Attawapiskat, are served by WAHA, the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority, which relies on the province and the North East LHIN for more than half of its budget, because the province has a direct responsibility to ensure that health care services are accessible to the First Nations people living along the James Bay coast. Speaker, did you know that there are only six mental health workers for the entire coast, and that none of them serve children under the age of 18?

It has been 30 days since Attawapiskat declared a state of mental health emergency. When did the Minister of Health first learn that no mental health services were available to youth under the age of 18, and why didn't he see fit to fill this gap in services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question, particularly about the situation in Attawapiskat, because I think, as the Legislature knows, immediately upon hearing about that mental health crisis involving children and youth in the community, the government of Ontario acted and committed $2 million for an emergency medical assistance team, which was comprised, among others, of mental health workers appropriate for children and youth as well as clinical experts and clinicians that would work in the local hospital. In fact, they were deployed within 24 hours of us making that commitment to be able to provide both on a proactive basis to work with the community and provide the supports to children and youth who were experiencing this crisis, but also to provide relief to those hospital front-line health care workers, who clearly have been burdened by this crisis, to provide them with some relief and replace them with front-line workers who could provide that necessary mental health support.

M^me^ France Gélinas: The First Nations people of the coast need a long-term commitment from this provincial government, and they want it today. There are other health service gaps that the province should fill, not wait. There are positions left vacant to balance the hospital's budget. The province should step up, not wait. There are plans for layoffs at hospitals up the coast. The government should step up and stop those layoffs, not wait.

We have a crisis, Speaker, and time is of the essence. Will the minister make these commitments today to improve the health care services of the good people of Attawapiskat and everybody else on the James Bay coast?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased, in fact, to talk with the local chief, Chief Shisheesh. The member for Timmins–James Bay was present for that conference call as well as the federal MP, Charlie Angus. We talked about not simply the initial 30 days of the emergency medical assistance team, but I told them that we would be renewing that mandate and the emergency medical assistance team would remain for an additional 30 days to be able to provide that support.

Also, they're working with the community, ourselves, WAHA and the other partners and with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to develop that long-term plan to make sure that we're making the right investments and that the right personnel are on the ground.

I was very appreciative that we were able to have all levels of government talking about that issue. Of course, we're working in very close coordination with our federal partners as well.

Also with WAHA, I have to point out that we provided them with an additional $4 million in January, and $4 million last year as well, to help them with some of those pressures they're facing.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Earlier this week, the minister announced the province's response to input from the public and to the 87 recommendations outlined in the report from the coordinated land use planning review advisory panel, chaired by the former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie. The substantial review that the ministry continues to shepherd and the considerable, diligent work done by the panel included 17 town halls across the greater Golden Horseshoe area and the consideration of over 19,300 submissions.

The goal of the review, as mandated by the Premier, has been to improve alignment across provincial plans and transit investments, and to support planning and development decisions that will create more complete communities across the province.

Speaker, through you, will the minister tell us about the themes of the province's proposed changes to the plans that shape how we use land in the greater Golden Horseshoe?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for her very good question. The greater Golden Horseshoe, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is Canada's fastest-growing urban region and the province's economic engine.

The carefully considered changes we are proposing will ensure smart growth in the region. This means promoting compact, vibrant communities that support jobs and public transit, and reward us with an expanded greenbelt. These changes are designed to keep goods and people moving in the region efficiently, protect suitable

lands for new and expanding businesses, make sure farms continue to flourish, reduce the negative impacts of climate change and further enhance the protection of precious natural areas. Together, these are major steps in boosting our economy, furthering smart, sustainable living, and protecting our environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I appreciate the minister's answer. Confronting these challenges in how we shape communities in this province is an historic step for Ontario. These changes demonstrate that the government remains committed to growing the greenbelt and is putting an end to urban sprawl in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Since its inception, this review has always been grounded in engagement with Ontarians, who clearly have a passion for the future of their communities. This stage of the process is no different. Ontarians will now have a further opportunity to weigh in on these proposed changes to the province's land use plan and to continue to have their voices heard.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister share with the House what the next steps in the review process will be?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I sure can, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to do so after the great work that the honourable David Crombie and his team did coming in with 87 recommendations, and they did what I thought was the impossible: come in with absolute consensus.

We're going through a second stage of consultation. There will be public open houses that will be held across the greater Golden Horseshoe. We'll also be taking input through the Environmental Registry and our ministry website. It's important that we all work together to get things right. We're going to ensure that that happens.

I'm very proud—in fact, we should all be proud in this House—of the work our government has done to grow our award-winning greenbelt, curb urban sprawl and create complete communities for us all to live, work and raise our families in. Great stuff.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we dismiss, I just want to take a moment to offer a reminder to the House. There seems to be some misunderstanding of speaking to the Chair. You do not speak to the member on either side. You're speaking to the Chair. Whoever is in the chair is receiving your question and receiving your answer. It doesn't matter if you are looking at me, but it's helpful to remember it by looking at the Chair. You can put the question to the person opposite, and you can put the answer to the person opposite, without it being a conversation back and forth. I'm going to ask you to keep that in mind.

The second thing I want to bring to your attention is—and I've asked for this plenty of times and continue to hear it; it's almost an affront to what I'm asking you to do, so I'm almost taking it personally as the Speaker—when I ask you not to use their names. Even in the heckling, it's happening more and more. I'm asking for it to stop. I'm going to ask this time to simply say the member's title or the member's riding. It would be extremely helpful in debate and inside of the decorum in this House.

There are no deferred votes. This House—sorry. Point of order: the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order, Speaker: I know that everyone in the House will want to join me in congratulating the London Knights on winning the OHL championship and wishing them the very, very best as they move on to win the Memorial Cup.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for that opening for the deputy House leader for a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: Some of us will dissent from that.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The cabinet is now divided, as you can see. The cabinet is divided. Those of us from the Niagara region do not join in the congratulations. We do congratulate the Niagara IceDogs on their fine performance throughout the playoffs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That would definitely get us started with each of our ridings, so I'm just going to say that there are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I'd like to welcome sincerely, from the Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living, Vickie Ellis, Cody Bell, Diane Chavarie, Deb Smith and Michele Bell. A warm welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Steven Sherwood from my riding of Toronto–Danforth here to see statement period today.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to recognize Marie Perrotta and her husband, Francis Hare, who are here at Queen's Park to listen to my member's statement.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to introduce Wendy Preskow, founder of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, who is here to watch our debate on my private member's bill.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 547

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is my pleasure today to rise and speak about an upcoming awards ceremony that the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 547 is hosting in my riding of York–Simcoe.

This year, the honour and awards dinner is being held to honour the past achievements of members and those in the past year who have contributed to the welfare of the branch and the Legion. Branch 547 will be recognizing Donald Janes, Harry McKenzie and Norman Knowles for their 45 years of uninterrupted service, and will also be recognizing Kenneth Coston for his 50 years of uninterrupted service.

I want to just make note of the fact that following right after VE day last week, it's fitting that we are demonstrating the vibrancy and the commitment that continue to be maintained throughout our communities through the Royal Canadian Legion.

I look forward to getting together in June for D-Day.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to read today from a speech about the autism cuts, given by my constituent Steven Sherwood at a rally here on May 5. He said:

"The Ontario government is playing a political shell game, justified by trying to balance the budget on the backs of some of the most vulnerable children in our province. This is unacceptable. This is disgusting."

"Peter"—his son—"has been waiting to receive IBI treatment for almost two years, and while our son will likely receive some therapy under the existing IBI program, he will age out within weeks of starting. He is an incredible child, and is full of potential, but he needs intensive therapy like IBI to help him to discover his voice and be given the chance to thrive.

"Bottom line ... This program change will eliminate access to intensive services like IBI for the vast majority of Ontario's autistic children who qualify for it. How can a policy change like this be allowed to continue?

"The government needs to go back to the drawing board and come up with a better plan."

I want to thank Mr. Sherwood and all of the parents who have spoken out, organized and rallied on behalf of their children. I want to thank my colleague Monique Taylor, who has been such a strong voice in defence of these children and these families in this Legislature.

Again, I want to add to their voices. The government has to change course. It has to protect these children, not cut them off the waiting list.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I recognize the member for Beaches–East York, I want to remind all the members that we address each other by the riding.

MARIE PERROTTA

Mr. Arthur Potts: Today I would like to recognize the Pegasus organization and Marie Perrotta, one of the founding directors of the organization. I would like to take the opportunity to recognize her two decades of service as executive director and thank her for her leadership in our community.

Ms. Perrotta was on the founding board when it was first established in 1994. Pegasus was established to ensure that those with developmental disabilities were supported through adulthood and able to be meaningfully involved in their communities.

As a group of parents and professionals, the founders of Pegasus were concerned for the future of their children and other children as they grew into young adults who did not have any support programs to assist them after the age of 21. Marie recognized a need in the community, and she helped establish four community sites that serve this population of our community.

Marie is very active in other aspects of our community and has worked tirelessly to ensure that government and the community were well aware of this unique situation.

Ms. Perrotta's impact on Beaches–East York and the greater Toronto community through Pegasus has been far-reaching. This special group of people have administered the programming at Pegasus since 1994 and have worked tirelessly to ensure that these programs are run efficiently and smoothly to ensure their success.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Perrotta, Pegasus organization, all their board of directors and all the volunteers for the work that they do in our community. Her hard work, mentorship, recruitment of volunteers etc. helps grow and sustain the volunteer community of Pegasus—and her humility, as she consistently wants to give others credit for the hard work she does.

I'd ask fellow members to join me in congratulating this exceptional community leader and wishing her and her husband, Francis, all the best in their next endeavours.

MANUFACTURING SUMMIT

Mr. Michael Harris: On Tuesday, almost 300 attendees and 30 exhibitors gathered in my region for the fifth annual Manufacturing Summit hosted by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

The summit is held as a way to bring the manufacturing and supply chain community together. This half-day conference has grown year after year, with useful breakout sessions and informative keynote speakers. It also doubles as a great opportunity to share with people in the region the importance of manufacturing. In fact, one in five jobs are in the manufacturing or supply chain sector in the region of Waterloo. It's about 20% of our local economic outlook.

This was not always the case, however. In 2008, sales for Canadian manufacturers dropped by 30% and exports to the United States fell by 35%.

Ontario's manufacturing sector is in the midst of a significant transformation as industry leaders retool, reinvent and rethink their businesses for maximum competitiveness, performance and growth. Never have the challenges been more significant nor the opportunities more numerous for Ontario manufacturers.

In fact, on Tuesday, two manufacturers in my riding—Ontario Drive and Gear as well as Kuntz Electro-

plating—were featured at the summit. Michael Kuntz of Kuntz Electroplating spoke at Tuesday's summit, saying, "Failure to adapt and evolve will lead to failure. Resilience, innovation, agility and adaptability are essential qualities for any successful manufacturer today."

Speaker, I'm proud to host businesses with these qualities in my region.

RONALD McDONALD HOUSE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Last week, down in Windsor, we opened the first Ronald McDonald House in Canada to be located within a hospital. It's the 15th Ronald McDonald House in Canada. There are now 357 of them around the world.

I want to give a big shout-out to McDonald's, to the Ronald McDonald House Charities and to our hard-working staff and board of directors at Windsor Regional Hospital.

This brand new, seven-bedroom home on the third floor of Met campus cost more than $1.5 million. It started with a dream that a friend of mine had about seven years ago. Paul Couvillon's granddaughter Miranda was born two months premature. She stayed at a neonatal unit at a hospital in Detroit. The Couvillons were treated like royalty at the Ronald McDonald House there.

Until now, our other options were London or Toronto. Actually, 26% of the families who stay at the Ronald McDonald House in London are from the Windsor area.

Windsor's new Ronald McDonald House will cater to the families of more than 400 babies who are at Met's neonatal intensive care unit each year. I think they should call that "the peekaboo ICU."

Thank you to Lou-Anne Farrell, the president of the board for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southwestern Ontario; to Margaret Anderson, the executive director; and to Cathy Loblaw, the president and CEO of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Canada.

Our new facility will help families deal with the stress that comes with having a premature baby just around the corner in the neonatal ICU.

1310

NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I am honoured today to stand as a nurse and a member of this government to mark Nursing Week today, May 12, which is Florence Nightingale's birthday.

Nurses are proud of their valued profession, their skills and role as skilled care providers and patient advocates. We celebrate the dedication, knowledge and skills that nurses possess and the challenges that they sometimes face as they provide quality, compassionate care.

This year the Ontario Nurses' Association, ONA, has chosen the theme "We are Ontario's nurses. Nurses know."

Nurses know how valuable their care is in ensuring that patients have the best possible health outcomes. The value of proper RN staffing cannot be overstated, especially for acutely ill patients in hospitals. RN care means a lower incidence of patient complications and, therefore, saves the system money in the long run. Nurses know that every patient deserves the best quality care possible, and they work diligently to make Ontario's health care system even better.

Yesterday, I was pleased to meet with members of ONA from my region, and tomorrow I will be visiting my former workplace, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, as part of Nursing Week.

ONA represents 60,000 registered nurses and allied health professionals, as well as more than 14,000 nursing student affiliates, who provide care in hospitals, long-term care, the community, public health, clinics and industry. I want to thank them and all my sisters and brothers in nursing for all of the work that they do each and every day.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to take this opportunity to speak about age-friendly communities. I'm sorry that the minister responsible for seniors is not in the House this afternoon to hear this.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I remind the member that we do not address members who are not present. Attendance is not acceptable to talk about.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I understand. Thank you.

As many here know, seniors are the fastest-growing age group in Canada. As a former employee of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, I know that an important part of being an age-friendly community is supporting policies, programs, services and environments which help people remain active as they age. Accessible and affordable environments that support people's needs can allow older people to stay in their homes without facing the challenges of isolation, immobility and loss of independence.

I want to salute the town of Whitby, in my riding, which is developing an action plan, in collaboration with major seniors' organizations in the province, to become an age-friendly community.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize all Ontario volunteers. Whether it's by helping with newcomer settlement, spending Sundays with seniors at a retirement home, organizing cultural events or coaching a children's soccer team, volunteers make invaluable contributions to our compassionate and vibrant province. They do so without pay and without any expectation of recognition. Each year in Ontario, almost five million volunteers contribute almost 860 million volunteer hours.

It's important that we acknowledge the selfless work of Ontario's volunteers. That's why the Ministry of

Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade implemented its annual volunteer service awards program. This year, the ministry will hold over 50 ceremonies across the province to celebrate the contributions of volunteers. These people are a vital resource for our communities. Their efforts inspire others to share their time and skills.

Over the past three evenings, I've had the pleasure to personally congratulate and thank many of these volunteers, many from Toronto and the surrounding areas.

I'm proud to have many active and engaged volunteer-based organizations in my own riding of Davenport, and I want to congratulate the 136 volunteers who, this year, were recognized with a volunteer service award. The work that these groups do has a tremendous impact on the quality of life for thousands of residents of Davenport.

I'm very proud that our government recognizes the importance of volunteering, and I'm very proud of the theme for this year: "Volunteers, the Heart of our Community."

BLADDER CANCER

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I rise to recognize the month of May as Bladder Cancer Awareness Month and the good work of Bladder Cancer Canada—and this is coming from both a doctor as well as a nurse, my colleague the MPP from Cambridge.

This form of cancer currently affects about 80,000 Canadians. It's the fifth most common cancer overall—fourth for men, 12th for women—with unfortunately more than 8,000 new diagnoses annually.

Annual fundraising walks by Bladder Cancer Canada are held in 20 cities across the country.

Founded by two bladder cancer survivors, David Guttman and Jack Moon, and currently headed by executive director Tammy Northam, Bladder Cancer Canada is a nationally registered Canadian charity supported by a medical advisory board and a medical research board consisting of the top bladder cancer specialists across the country.

Speaker, if I might use this opportunity as a physician—and nurse, in tandem—the most common symptom of bladder cancer is unfortunately blood in the urine or, as we call it, hematuria, occurring in more than 80% of cases. Other symptoms may include bladder spasms, increased frequency and urgency of urination, and a burning sensation during urination. Smoking is a common risk factor—a universal evil, as all doctors know, and as you, Speaker, as a nurse, will know yourself—and age and occupational exposure to specific chemicals. Generally we will, of course, assess at the family doc level and then refer on for other treatments and examinations such as cystoscopy.

Speaker, once again, with your permission, I salute Bladder Cancer Canada and their excellent work. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I thank all the members.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I rise on a point of order. They weren't here when we were doing the introduction of guests, so I would beg your indulgence, but I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature my friends from Community Living Chatham-Kent who are here visiting us at Queen's Park. Starting at the left and working to the right, we have Wayne Easterbrook, Tod Kane, Charlie Beintema, Dave Bromley and Randy Renaud. Welcome, gentlemen, to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We welcome all our guests.

Also, the time for members' statements is finished.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IMMUNIZATION OF SCHOOL PUPILS AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'IMMUNISATION DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Hoskins moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Immunization of School Pupils Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'immunisation des élèves.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, would you like to make a short statement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly would. This act amends the Immunization of School Pupils Act to require parents to complete an immunization education session before filing a statement of conscience or religious belief, to expand the categories of persons who may provide statements regarding the administration of immunization agents and, lastly, to require those who administer immunizing agents to provide information to the local medical officer of health.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd just like to introduce Chris Beesley, who is from Community Living Ontario. We worked together in the literacy sector. I'd like to welcome him to the Legislature today.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Madam Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the establishment of a panel to draft a code of conduct for members of provincial Parliament.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is there unanimous consent for the motion? Agreed? Agreed.

Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that a panel be established to draft a code of conduct for members of provincial Parliament in the province of Ontario; and

That the panel be composed of one member from each recognized party, and be chaired by the Speaker; and

That the panel should ensure that the code of conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following principles:

—Promote a safe, secure and respectful work environment that is free from harassment, intimidation and bullying;

—Set out guidance for conduct by or against members as they conduct their work in the legislative precinct, in their ridings, or any other venue where they are conducting business as MPPs;

—Include mechanisms for addressing complaints; and

—Suggest training and education initiatives;

That, once complete, the Speaker shall lay the report of the panel before the assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Bradley has moved that a panel be established to draft a code of conduct—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY
JOURNEE DE L'INTEGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today is Community Living Day, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome our guests from Community Living Ontario and many of its local agencies from across the province. We have been joined by Chris Beesley, chief executive officer of Community Living Ontario; Brad Saunders, the CEO of Community Living Toronto; Hélène Morin-Chain, president of Community Living Ontario; James Taylor, council chair of Community Living Ontario; Gord Kyle, director of policy; and Jo-Anne Demick, the executive director of Community Living Parry Sound.

I would also like to acknowledge that May is Community Living Month. In honour of this month, the CN Tower was lit up last night with green and blue to shine a light on Community Living and the message of inclusion for everyone.

For 63 years, Community Living organizations have been true leaders in advocating for people with developmental disabilities. It started with the families who formed the original Community Living movement to fight for their children's right to attend public school. The movement soon expanded into one that championed the rights of all individuals with developmental disabilities to be equal participants in their communities.

Today, there are 12,000 members in more than 100 local Community Living associations.

Family is and has always been at the heart of what the movement is about. La famille est, et a toujours été, au coeur du mouvement.

I am always humbled by the personal commitment and caring I see when I meet with community living organizations. Je suis toujours impressionnée par l'engagement personnel et la compassion que j'observe lorsque je rencontre des représentants des organisations Community Living.

Inspired by this movement, we are working with Community Living organizations and other partners to transform the developmental services system into one that is more accessible, fair and sustainable.

Let me also recognize Community Living London, Community Living Brant and Community Living Algoma, who are leading the way in transitioning away from sheltered workshops towards inclusive, person-centred supports in the community and effective individualized employment supports, and in sharing their stories with other agencies on the transition journey.

Independence, inclusion and choice are the core principles behind our three-year, $810-million investment strategy for community and developmental services. My ministry has just completed year two of this investment and, together with our partners, we have already made tremendous strides in helping thousands of Ontarians. Approximately 15,200 people and their families are getting new direct funding so they can choose the programs that will help them achieve their goals. We have provided Passport funding to approximately 7,200 people since 2014. We have eliminated the Special Services at Home program wait-list more than a year ahead of schedule. We have funded new residential supports to more than 800 individuals—more than halfway to our target.

Over the next year, along with our partner ministries, we will also develop a provincial employment strategy for people with disabilities. We want to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by helping them connect to the labour market and by engaging and supporting employers. Providing increased choice and greater community inclusion is key to our efforts.

We know that tackling issues facing families in the developmental services sector is not just about more funding. We are working to make our employment support programs more effective to help people get real jobs

in their community. Nous nous efforçons de rendre nos programmes de soutien de l'emploi plus efficaces pour aider les gens à trouver des emplois réels dans leur communauté.

For people who choose to work, we want them to have real work for real pay. Pour ceux qui choisissent de travailler, nous voulons qu'ils trouvent un vrai emploi réellement rémunéré.

I would like to commend the Community Living movement for their support as we work together on this. Je tiens à remercier le mouvement des organisations Community Living de leur collaboration à nos efforts communs vers l'atteinte de cet objectif.

As we continue to transform the developmental services system, we look to our partners to help make Ontario a more inclusive province.

None of this would be possible without the drive and inspiration of the families and caring individuals in the Community Living movement.

Madam Speaker, I invite all members on both sides of the House to join me in recognizing the vital and important work of the thousands of Ontarians who are proud champions of Community Living Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Responses?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today is Community Living Day at Queen's Park. We have many representatives from Community Living Ontario and Community Living agencies across the province. I would like to welcome all of them to the Legislature and thank them personally for the great chocolate bars we got at the reception today.

Our Community Living agencies promote inclusion, citizenship and equality for people who have an intellectual disability. I'm inspired by Community Living's mission to create a world where people with an intellectual disability can fully participate in their community because they are included in decisions and considered citizens. I know that Community Living works towards this mission every day and their results are invaluable for so many individuals and families.

Among the many programs offered by Community Living agencies are housing supports, employment support and day programs. These services help to provide independence for individuals with disabilities and are an important part of the developmental services sector.

Over the last few months, we have been working hard to voice the concerns of the sector and the families that Community Living agencies serve. At top of mind are the closures of sheltered workshops, many of which are run by Community Living, pay equity issues and the availability of housing.

I have heard from families across the province who are extremely concerned about these government plans. Many fear that this will compromise the work and social opportunities that are so important for the individuals who work at these places. What we need and what we have been asking for since the initial announcement in December is a detailed transition plan and a consultation period.

In line with the mission of Community Living, everyone deserves to have their feedback and advice heard on this important policy issue. I remain disappointed that the government has not committed to a formal consultation period and that they have still refused to provide a detailed transition plan. Individual families and agencies deserve better.

I also remain concerned about the availability of housing for individuals with disabilities. Community Living has gone above and beyond to provide inclusive housing opportunities. They need a partner in this government to ensure that everyone who wants to live with independence has the opportunity to do so.

In Perth–Wellington, we are lucky enough to have a number of Community Living agencies. I would like to recognize the staff at Community Living St. Marys, Community Living Stratford, Community Living North Perth and Community Living Guelph Wellington. I had the opportunity to visit these agencies, and I frequently meet with families who rely on the important resources that Community Living provides.

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To the staff at Community Living agencies, we say thank you. Your commitment to inclusive and independent living has improved the lives of so many. To the families who support their loved ones, we recognize your hard work and your tireless commitment each and every day. And to all of those who are visiting today and are a part of the Community Living family, thank you for your outstanding citizenship and for sharing your stories.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to extend a warm welcome to the many people with Community Living Ontario who are here at Queen's Park, joining us today. I'm always proud to stand in the Ontario Legislature on behalf of my constituents of Kenora–Rainy River. On behalf of New Democrats and Andrea Horwath, it's my pleasure to rise and speak today in celebration of Community Living Day.

For over 60 years, Community Living Ontario has advocated for people with intellectual disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of community life so that all people are able to live with dignity, share in all elements of living in our communities and have the opportunity to be better enabled to fully participate.

I was proud to have attended the reception earlier this afternoon with many of my MPP colleagues to help celebrate the achievements of Community Living Ontario. I also had the pleasure to meet with so many individuals who had come from across the province and who continue to receive the services that Community Living offers, and I was able to hear their stories.

In my riding of Kenora–Rainy River, I'm proud of Community Living Ontario and the work that it does to provide services to the residents of Fort Frances and Dryden. The excellent support staff is part of a dynamic team of individuals who work at these two locations. I'm looking forward to seeing and meeting many of these individuals in the coming months.

I'd like to highlight some of the outstanding services that Community Living Fort Frances and Dryden provide. Employment supports are provided so that each person can live their life to the fullest. Individuals are offered ongoing training and support, which will facilitate either paid employment or unpaid placements which are consistent with the goals and the needs of the individual. While the emphasis may not necessarily be on competitive employment, it includes satisfying work alternatives reflective of individual interests.

They also provide 24-hour supports. This is a comprehensive service for people with long-term and intensive support and care needs. The level of supervision is high and is geared towards each person's skills and abilities. In-home and out-of-home supports are provided in a wide variety of areas, such as personal health and safety, mobility, household maintenance and transportation.

Finally, leisure activities are also available. Through the use of technology, people are offered a range of experiences, including sports, education and literacy, life skills, physical therapy, music therapy, vocational skills, stretching and relaxation.

Speaker, as you can see, Community Living Ontario provides a range of programs and supports to those living with intellectual disabilities. I support Community Living Ontario and the 100 branches across the province as they continue with their strong advocacy for clients, to ensure that we all have inclusive communities in Ontario.

However, Speaker, there is still much more that needs to be done. I had the opportunity, as I mentioned, to speak with a number of people at the Community Living reception. They told me time and time again that there are real challenges in this province with the shelter allowance with ODSP. It comes in at less than $500 a month and many areas that were represented at the reception told me that the market rent can be in excess of $700, on average, to $900 or more, depending on where they're living. What that means is, if they're taking money away from the rest of the money that they have to pay for their shelter, there's less money for food. It means an increased reliance on food banks and it also means a life that is doomed to poverty.

We have to change those things. We need to have more affordable housing units across this province and we need to have real employment opportunities. That was something that people had talked about time and time again: "I want to work. I am capable of working. Let me go out and work. I just need a job." There is a lot more work we need to do on that front.

We know the fantastic work that Community Living Ontario does, but this work is simply not possible if there's limited funding and a lack of other supports from the provincial government.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by thanking the organizers of the reception today as well as the individuals sitting here in the galleries. Thank you so much for travelling across Ontario to come here and join us today and share your stories.

I thank Community Living Ontario and all of its member organizations for the outstanding work that they do every day.

PETITIONS

APRAXIA

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

"Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

"Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

"Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day."

I completely agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Spencer.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is called "Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care," and these are signatures from across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

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

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give these petitions to page Emma.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation." I'd like to recognize Hamid John, a registered dental hygienist, for collecting these hundreds of signatures and sending them in. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and I'll send it down with page Julia.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

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

"Whereas Bill 152, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2015 is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

"Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

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"Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

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

"That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 152 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money."

I agree with the content. I'll affix my signature to it and provide it to page Brendan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here.

"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 re-mortgage 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 support this wholeheartedly, affix my name and send it with page Laura.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M^me^ Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'apporter une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu qu'il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l'Ontario;

« Attendu que d'offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu'à préserver l'environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d'Orléans et de l'est d'Ottawa ont besoin d'une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

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

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l'Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l'est d'Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Il me fait plaisir de signer cette pétition et de la remettre au page Spencer.

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."

I support this petition as well and affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

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

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Ayana.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Granville Anderson: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of the municipality of Clarington have been promised that the GO train would be extended to Courtice and Bowmanville;

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

"That the province of Ontario keep its promise to Clarington residents and commit to providing the necessary funding for Metrolinx to complete the extension of the GO train to Courtice and Bowmanville no later than 2018."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Brendan.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: "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."

As I am in favour, I affix my signature and give it to page Spencer.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

"Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA ... is subsidized by more than $100 million annually; and

"Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

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

"To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation."

I wholeheartedly agree and send it down with page Samuel.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition regarding hydro.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

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

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come"—of course, what's left to continue to own publicly.

I'm going to give this to Julia to deliver to the table.

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX TROUBLES DE L'ALIMENTATION

Mr. Thibeault moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week / Projet de loi 189, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux troubles de l'alimentation.

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

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm honoured to be able to rise and speak to my private member's bill, Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week in the first week of February of every year. I think it's important to recognize that this awareness week is just the start of what we need to do with addressing eating disorders in our province and right across the country.

I know that we also have a national awareness week and that British Columbia has legislated an Eating Disorders Awareness Week, from February 1 to 7 of each year. So I'm very honoured to be able to stand and bring forward this bill to try and create the same awareness week here in Ontario.

Before I continue with my speech, I think it's very important that I acknowledge several individuals who were extremely helpful in helping me bring forward this bill and with providing information. One of them is here in the members' gallery: Wendy Preskow, founder of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. Wendy, thank you for all your insight. Also with us today—there were quite a few of people in the media studio with us, so I'd just like to go through this list: Wendy's husband, Len; Lynne Koss, who was helpful; Dr. Blake Woodside; Dr. Debra Katzman; Dr. Karen Fleming; Marlene Sachs; Suzanne Phillips, from the National Eating Disorder Information Centre; Marbella Carlos, from the same centre; and Don Seymour, the chief executive officer of Addiction and Mental Health Services–Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington, who I know is also here. I know that my colleague from Kingston will be speaking a little later as well.

This all stems from, I would say, a constituent of mine in the riding of Sudbury. A young single mother came to my office and asked to meet with me because she needed some help. In that meeting, she identified that she had an eating disorder and that she was able to seek treatment in the past and she was able to get the help that she needed. But now she was feeling a lot of those symptoms coming

back. As a young single mother, she wanted to make sure that she could get in and change those feelings, those temptations that she was having, a lot earlier.

That's when I realized that I was there to try to help, but I really didn't know enough about eating disorders. So starting to make some calls on her behalf, it was interesting for me to find that many health care professionals and many professionals in our communities don't have the facts, don't understand and don't know about eating disorders.

That's when we were starting to reach out to Health Sciences North in Sudbury, which has an eating disorder clinic. If I can, I'd just like to take a couple of seconds to acknowledge the great work that Health Sciences North and that clinic do on a daily basis. We also reached out to the Canadian Mental Health Association and spoke with them. They also provided some advice and some feedback on what we could do to help this young single mother.

I also realized, as you start talking to people about them, that there are many myths out there about eating disorders. Some of them are: This only affects wealthy white women; this is about vanity; and you can just tell people to eat and this will change this disorder. But the fact is that eating disorders affect men and women of all backgrounds, of all ages, of all ethnicities, sexual orientations and incomes. It truly is a mental health issue.

I know we talk in this House often about ending the stigma, about ending much of the stigmas that are out there to ensure that we can start talking openly about this, to make sure that we're aware—as politicians, as health care professionals, as parents—of what the symptoms are, but also what the treatments are. Those who are suffering from eating disorders—it also affects the parents, the siblings, the spouses, the friends and the caregivers.

One of the things I think is also important to recognize and to acknowledge is that eating disorders are a very serious and often deadly mental illness. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental health issue. On average, 10% of sufferers will die within 10 years of developing an eating disorder. The numbers range to as high as a 15% mortality rate for anorexia nervosa. Once in treatment, the average time for recovery from an eating disorder is still long; it's between two and seven years. Only 50% of individuals fully recover, meaning half of individuals with eating disorders live with the illness until they die, often very prematurely.

In 2013, the House of Commons—our friends in Ottawa—Standing Committee on the Status of Women agreed to study eating disorders among Canadian women and girls. The results of that 2014 report, based on testimony from 27 witnesses, outlined the barriers to addressing eating disorders in Canada, the first of which was a lack of awareness. I'm very pleased today to be able to stand and talk about Bill 189, because Bill 189 is doing just that. It's seeking to raise the profile of eating disorders in Ontario.

We want to spread awareness among the general public; we want to educate professionals engaged in treating eating disorders. Right now, we see insufficient training on eating disorder treatment among medical professionals, counsellors and others in that health care sector. We also want to, of course, increase media literacy around this issue because, as mentioned, for too many people, eating disorders are seen as a choice, a disease of vain middle-class adolescent girls. This is misinformation. It's stereotyping, and that's exactly what we need to do by spreading awareness: end this stereotyping.

Our society has made significant strides towards countering the stigma of mental illness. Bell Let's Talk is an important, important campaign. I know in my riding of Sudbury, back in early February, we had a Bell Let's Talk session at the Steelworkers hall. We had three or four great speakers, and one of them was Michael Landsberg from TSN. He was talking about #sicknotweak. He has a great campaign under way right now, recognizing that we can change the stigma, and we can change that sigma by awareness. That's what this bill doing.

Statistics tell us that between 600,000 and 900,000 Canadians suffer from eating disorders at any time in our country. Some 0.5% of our population, or approximately 150,000 Canadians, currently suffer from anorexia; 1%, or roughly 300,000 Canadians, suffer from bulimia. However, we know the statistics are likely flawed, as they only account for people who seek treatment for eating disorders. It's only accounting for the people who seek treatment. The real number is probably much, much higher.

In order to better address this issue, we need to get better statistics, and part of that depends on creating a safe place for people to seek treatment. For that to happen, we need to raise awareness, lead by example and counter the stigma. Greater awareness has a role to play in prevention and early intervention of eating disorders, and early intervention is helpful.

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One thing we can do is prepare our educators—our schools—more fully. Make teachers more aware of early symptoms of eating disorders and how best to address them. This morning in the media studio, Dr. Debra Katzman, who is a pediatrician—and, I know, many, many other things; she has a very long title of qualifications—was talking about how we're seeing a higher prevalence of eating disorders in our children. Madam Speaker, she's now talking about children three years old. A three-year-old child can have an eating disorder. While many of us might not recognize the symptoms, because we're not aware of this, I'm hoping that this bill will start that process, will start with the steps for us to be able to start recognizing many of the things our health care professionals were telling us this morning when we launched this. Madam Speaker, if we're looking at our school system, the responsibility is not solely on teachers. We need to help parents and caregivers understand how to encourage healthy body image as well.

I know that I'm running out of time, and I know there are many other members who are going to speak to this. As I conclude, I think it's important to recognize that

awareness is not the solution to the issue around eating disorders, but it is a necessary first step. We need to build awareness to counter misinformation, we need to build awareness to end the stereotyping and stigma experienced by eating disorder sufferers, and we need to build awareness to help people feel comfortable seeking help and to prepare caregivers to provide the most effective support possible.

We're always hopeful that this bill will contribute to greater awareness. As I wrap up, Madam Speaker, I again want to thank Wendy Preskow for her constant advocacy on this. I know, as the parent of a daughter, that this is an important first step. I am just honoured to be able to have worked with you and your group. As we keep saying, this is our first step. But we'll work with you as you move forward on our next steps.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was my honour to speak to this.

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to acknowledge and thank the member opposite for allowing me to speak. I really appreciate this.

I'm proud to rise today and speak about my colleague's important bill, Bill 189, the Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act. Madam Speaker, we've come a long way in recent years in recognizing mental illness. As my colleague said, the Bell Let's Talk campaign has been tremendous in lifting the stigma around depression and allowing people to be open about their depression. We in this House also passed the PTSD legislation, which will help first responders access the resources they need to help them. All these initiatives have raised these issues and brought them into public discourse, and I'm proud that I was able to be here for the passage of the PTSD legislation.

As we shed light on mental illness, we must also shed light on eating disorders. Eating disorders are a prevalent illness in our image-obsessed society, and we must recognize the following facts: In a 2002 survey, 28% of girls in grade 9 and 29% of girls in grade 10 engaged in weight loss behaviours. These numbers show the impact of eating disorders on our adolescents. And it's not just our youth who are impacted by this illness. Adults are all too often drawn into unhealthy weight loss and dieting. The impact of this is silent, but it affects so many people who suffer in silence. Whether it is our youth, who are bullied for being perceived as fat, or the hypersensitivity of both females and males to fit into a mould of what constitutes attractive or normal, anorexia, bulimia and all eating disorders are fought by so many people.

In fact, Madam Speaker—and I asked permission to do this—my daughter suffered with an eating disorder. I have seen first-hand what it can do to a person and the mental and physical toll it takes. My daughter has been struggling since she was 11 years old, and it's only been three years, at the age of 20, that I can officially say that my daughter has overcome engaging in harmful dieting practices and this troubling aspect of her life. So I understand what it can be—it may not be as significant as Wendy—to be a parent with a child who suffers from an eating disorder.

For a very long time, I was in the dark about my daughter's eating disorder. It's only after I caught her first-hand in a bulimic episode at the age of 14 that I realized how severe this issue was. As a parent with a child who suffers from an eating disorder, I understand the importance of learning about the signs and how to help our children with this illness. While I don't want to trivialize my daughter's experience, I also want to say that I know there are cases where significant intervention is required, and potentially hospitalization for severe weight loss.

We need to increase awareness of this illness so that females and males—adults and youth—are comfortable admitting they need help. Like depression, we need to be open about the silent challenges and illnesses affecting so many in our society and we need to encourage those who suffer to seek support.

So Madam Speaker, let's start talking about this illness and allowing people the space to admit they suffer. I am proud that my daughter was able to overcome this illness and I want to live in a society where people who suffer are completely comfortable to break their silence and seek out help.

In closing, we have come far in accepting mental illness as an illness and have started to build a society where it is okay to seek help. To all the children and youth of our province, please don't be ashamed that you are seeking help for something that could potentially destroy you.

Thank you to the member from Sudbury for moving such an important private member's bill and starting this important conversation. Merci.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 189. Eating disorders are complex illnesses that, for many families, can have devastating physical and psychological impacts on their lives. I've spoken previously about the great services offered by Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and about the positive impact that this wonderful Whitby facility has had on the lives of so many in Durham region.

In 2014, Speaker, the facility opened its new child and adolescent Eating Disorders Unit. The program offers an inter-professional model of care which includes individual as well as family and group therapy sessions. There's also a focus on education, eating rehabilitation and pharmacological treatment. It's an all-encompassing program. Ontario Shores is in a unique position to examine and execute treatments and programs for mental illnesses. Its eating disorder program development identifies clearly the complexity and enormity of the problem, and establishes a broad spectrum of therapies that are being used to treat them.

Prior to 2014, Speaker, patients and families had to access treatment outside of the country. All of this

changed when the first residential eating disorders program in Ontario opened its doors at Ontario Shores. The unit is open to children between 12 and 18 from across the province who are currently attending or are eligible to attend school, where no sustained recovery was evident thereby requiring an intensive treatment setting, have a local health care provider or team, and who are medically stable.

The program even has its own recovery high school. It's composed of mandatory elements; selectives representing four areas of brain function; electives; and volunteer work. At present, the program has 12 in-patients. Between April 2015 and March 2016, there were 20 admissions, 19 discharges and only one re-admission.

It's important, Speaker, that Ontarians realize that this problem is real and that they receive sufficient education to identify healthy diets and proper eating habits. But more importantly, for those families impacted, they must understand that eating disorders are a psychiatric illness, not simply poor dietary choices. If, by making this declaration, we can help bring eating disorders out from the darkness and into the light, then we're doing an enormous favour for so many families who suffer deeply but quietly. And to all, we can bring a more complete awareness of this illness.

I'm pleased to support this bill.

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm glad the member opposite has created this opportunity for us to have a conversation in this Legislature about eating disorders.

Eating disorders, as has been said, are unfortunately often misunderstood to be a choice, but they are not at all. Eating disorders are a serious and potentially life-threatening mental illness. They are not a lifestyle; they are not a diet. They cannot be willed away.

An awareness week like the one my colleague across the floor has proposed would certainly help bring these disorders to light and start a broader discussion about the complexity and the prevalence of eating disorders in Ontario. Awareness is crucial to combatting stigma and stereotypes, which is why it has been so successful in other national awareness weeks.

What's most important, I think, is that people need to understand those who suffer. They need to understand that there is no shame in asking for help, but we need to go further than just talking. Those people who have the courage to come forward and ask for help need options. We need to improve our services in this province to better support those who suffer from eating disorders, and this government has the power to make that happen.

Right now, there are limited resources for Ontarians with eating disorders. The GTA, for instance, has a population of over six million people, yet the area has only two eating disorder programs, accommodating only 14 adult inpatient beds. The waiting lists for OHIP-covered beds are often months long. There are no specialized treatment centres or facility or team of experts available for individuals who either require or request immediate care, and the needs for intervention for people with eating disorders are complex at all stages.

Eating disorders especially affect young people, both men and women. Treatment offered in hospitals generally includes medical stabilization and refeeding, but this kind of one-size-fits-all approach is said to only be successful in 25% of the cases. Successful treatment has to address both the physiological and the psychological needs of a patient, but the reality people face here in Ontario is that this kind of two-track approach is unavailable or not funded.

One treatment centre, Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, notes that there is a severe lack of OHIP-covered treatment options. The waiting list for the two OHIP-funded beds they have recently added was closed as of spring 2015.

For those seeking different, less-intensive treatment, there remain limited options. OHIP-covered outpatient programs are run only at certain hospitals, creating a geographic challenge for many people with eating disorders. That is sometimes also compounded with restrictive eligibility criteria or even a lack of specific treatment for eating disorders, instead addressing mental illness as whole.

The majority of clinicians who are knowledgeable and who actively treat eating disorders are not physicians. Their fees are not covered by most private health insurance plans. OHIP doesn't cover psychologists, for example, who can provide valuable help for people with eating disorders, and whose services can cost hundreds of dollars an hour.

I remember early in my term getting a desperate call from a parent. It stays with me because this mother was filled with fear—that's the only way I can describe it—because there were so few options for her. We tried to help, but, as the member from Whitby–Oshawa said, we had to send her to the States because that's where she could get the services.

There is no doubt that awareness is important, and I applaud the effort by the member, but we have the opportunity as legislators to help do so much more to support people in this province who suffer. We can do this together.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 189 that seeks to recognize the first week of February as Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I want to thank the member from Sudbury for drawing attention to this very important topic.

Many have been touched by mental health challenges, whether it's a friend, a co-worker, a family member or ourselves. In fact, one in three Canadians experience a mental health issue in their lifetime.

Our government's investments in community mental health and addictions have more than doubled since 2003, from $515 million to $1.1 billion. This increase in

funding represents an important cultural shift in how our society views and regards those living with mental illness issues.

This political commitment recognizes the severe consequences of inaction, especially for our children and youth, our well-being, our social cohesion and, in fact, our economy.

However, despite the strides that have been made to break down the barriers around mental health, many Canadians still believe that eating disorders are a personal choice. They are not. Eating disorders are a mental health condition, and they have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. They can affect anyone, and sometimes that means children as young as three years old.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I have two teenage daughters, who are now 17 and 19 years old. They live in a different world than we lived in, and with networking through social media, they have many peers as friends. In fact, they have thousands, but that's another story.

They have brought to my attention over the years a number of cases where their friends have had a slow decline in health due to eating disorders, where pounds are not just shed at a drastic and catastrophic rate, but their organs are actually shutting down. Several have had to be hospitalized in order to be stabilized, and we are currently praying for one who is in the hospital right now getting much-needed treatment.

Stigma and discrimination often come, too, from a lack of information and an inability to understand. Stigma and discrimination are serious barriers to diagnosis and treatment, and to acceptance in the community. They prevent individuals from reaching their full potential and leading a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

Building on the great work of local organizations and treatment centres such as the Hotel Dieu Hospital and Addiction and Mental Health Services in Kingston and the Islands, Eating Disorders Awareness Week will increase public understanding, reduce stigma and encourage people to come forward and seek support and treatment.

In 2014, the federal Standing Committee on the Status of Women produced a report that examined eating disorders specifically in girls and women in Canada. One mother reported, "I feel impending doom, the same impending doom I felt when I was alone at my lowest weight and bingeing/purging 24/7. It's the sense of profound fear that I'm not going to make it out of this eating disorder. I'm not going to be the one third that recovers. I may even be in the 20% that die....

"There is nowhere to go in the emergency. There are so few who understand. I still wake up dreading the day. How will I get through it? What will I eat or not eat? How will I control myself from eating trigger foods? I can't focus on anything. I can barely read, or write, or find joy in anything because I'm constantly paralyzed with fear and anxiety, consumed with indecision and yearning to be numb."

Greater awareness is needed among the general public and among professionals who encounter or treat individuals with eating disorders so that there is better recognition for the onset of symptoms and earlier intervention, which will, in return, result in more successful support and treatments.

Madam Speaker, I lend my full support to Bill 189.

Merci. Meegwetch. Thank you.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome my friends from Community Living Chatham-Kent, a new group that just got in. They're here visiting Queen's Park: Jonathan Myers, Wayne Bachynski, Kevin Sinclair, Brian Kelly, Jackie Choudhry and Craig Walker. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my thoughts to this important discussion today. I congratulate the member from Sudbury for bringing a very sensitive topic to the House that people can relate to and empathize with.

I think it's noteworthy to say that creating a full week of awareness will have lasting effects across the province, when people are encouraged to speak about their experiences so we can learn from them and, most importantly, learn how to support them.

That point was driven home for me today when the member from Ottawa–Orléans shared such a personal experience with it, having an eating disorder within her family. It drives home the point that we all have to do better in terms of our front-line health care and the services that are available.

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To that end, the member from Ottawa–Orléans used the phrase, "We need to break the silence." That reminded me of an initiative that Bruce Power initiated in our region just a couple of short weeks ago. For every time #BreakTheSilence was tweeted or retweeted, they generated dollars to support organizations throughout the region that do indeed offer support. It ended up that Bruce Power donated $80,000 to support organizations throughout the region. I congratulate all involved in that regard. We need to do more and we need to do everything we can to back up those support services.

Wes for Youth is an online support service that I've mentioned before in this House, but they cross the spectrum of needs of young people. Eating disorders are very much a part of their scope. And it's stunning. The outreach that they have online and the support from Bruce Power and concerned citizens speak volumes when it enables initiatives like Wes for Youth to continue.

I hope that, as we adopt an awareness week, not only do we focus on eating disorders but we focus on the types of supports that we need throughout our communities to support the victims' walk down the path towards recovery.

We've recognized and we've heard already that eating disorders are a very serious mental illness that impacts Ontarians throughout their lives. It's difficult to know

exactly how many people suffer from eating disorders in Ontario since there is no system currently in place, to my understanding, to track the number of sufferers.

We do know that these disorders are most prevalent among teenaged women and men who are going through life experiences that make them more sensitive about their body image. But we have to make sure that they know that supports are in place.

It's interesting: When I did a little bit of research on eating disorders, this whole spectrum truly is one of the most neglected and misunderstood health problems.

I just want to give another thank you to some people throughout my riding of Huron–Bruce who are taking important steps forward. They include the Alexandra Marine and General Hospital in Goderich. It offers, for example, specialized counselling to people diagnosed with eating disorders or engaging in eating disorder behaviours through clinics in Goderich, Wingham, Clinton, Exeter and Seaforth. This service is voluntary, and there are no charges or fees connected with attending the program.

Residents of Bruce county, on the other hand—I've mentioned the online service Wes for Youth, but there's also special counselling through the Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services clinic, located in Owen Sound, and at the Bruce Primary Mental Health Team in Hanover. Both of these organizations offer a variety of services to help individuals suffering from food and weight issues associated with anorexia, bulimia, weight preoccupation and disordered eating.

I just want to thank them and tell them, "We stand beside you." I congratulate Bruce Power for creating such a unique initiative to raise funds online through #BreakTheSilence. In my riding right now, there's a radiothon happening, facilitated by CKNX radio, that is raising funds for our health care heroes, and I thank them as well.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to rise in this Legislature and speak in support of this motion to establish an Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

I'd like to welcome and recognize Wendy Preskow, founder and president of NIED, the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, and also to welcome the professionals and supporters of this motion who are here today.

One of the very first constituent meetings that I ever had was with a dynamic young woman from NIED named Stephanie, who knew how important it was for MPPs to understand the realities of eating disorders.

I have met with parents, youth and health care professionals advocating on behalf of those who struggle and suffer with eating disorders. I have heard heart-wrenching stories.

Across our society, we are told to value beauty, money and lifestyle. Obviously there isn't money to be made from sustainable wellness and long-term health or satisfaction with self. I say this because everywhere we see ads and reinforcement of the message to get thin, to get skinny, to be less or to be more: to be unhappy with ourselves, to look in the mirror and see potential instead of seeing worth.

We should value health—absolutely. But physical as well as mental health matters. Wellness should not be a measure of waistline.

I taught for many years, and I have seen our education and health system focus on obesity, food and exercise. We see obesity. Often we don't see eating disorders, but they are there. We need to teach children about nutrition and wellness. When we constantly focus, though, on counting calories, we focus on how to restrict, how to self-harm and how to limit ourselves. We ought to focus on nutrition, positive body image, variety and diversity, and wellness.

I taught a grade 4 girl who had developed a daily exercise regimen involving weights, push-ups, sit-ups and desperate cardio for two straight hours a day and frightening caloric restriction because she was "disgusting." I have taught grade 7 and 8 girls who self-harm to cope with their challenges, and that self-harm usually involved cutting and food control. Our children are suffering in mainstream society and they need help. Our kids, though, need tools and not weapons.

Eating disorders can affect anyone, but they are predominantly suffered by women, and unfortunately, often our health care system doesn't know how to recognize or deal with them. Those who seek treatment or care are often ignored and made to further suffer when their illness is shrugged off or they're just told to eat. Someone with an eating disorder has a mental illness and, I would say, a very destructive and intensely emotional relationship with food. It is their control, their weapon, their tool, their lifeline and their pain.

Treatments that force someone slowly dying of anorexia back up to a safe weight are not only cruel, they are inhumane. When our treatments damage instead of support, we have to stop and change course. We don't have enough information. We don't keep stats on deaths due to eating disorders. When someone dies due to an eating disorder, usually their heart stops. They die from cardiac arrest, but we don't keep track of additional information like, "struggled through adolescence with anorexia nervosa" or "complications due to suspected eating disorder." We should keep track, because Ontarians deserve health care to meet their needs, and this is an area of need.

I was very glad to be at the opening of the adolescent Eating Disorders Unit at Ontario Shores that we heard about earlier today. It is the first of its kind in the province. In fact, before this specialized care unit, families had to send their children to the States for help and care. Dr. Leora Pinhas is the lead physician for the adolescent eating disorders program at Ontario Shores and is no stranger to dynamic advocacy. This Minister of Health and Long-Term Care needs to sit down with her for a day and learn; learn the realities and take her advice and that of other professionals. This is not an area where we can make it up. People are suffering and dying, and we need to find a way to help and not harm.

We are starting to talk more about mental health, but we clearly need to be talking about eating disorders. We need more awareness, and we need appropriate care. I'm glad to have this conversation in the Legislature, but I will be even more glad when we take it to heart and design appropriate care for those struggling with mental illness, specifically eating disorders.

I'm very pleased to support this motion.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I'd like to congratulate the member from Sudbury for bringing this initiative forward.

Eating disorders are complex conditions that often leave people feeling isolated and misunderstood. They are pernicious and persistent, and tragically, in many cases, they are the most fatal of all mental illnesses. As a parent of a child who has recovered from an eating disorder, I know that creating greater awareness is critical to supporting individuals, families and loved ones coping with an eating disorder.

Our daughter Kïrsten's experience with an eating disorder was a very challenging time for her and for our family. She struggled with anorexia and the mental as well as physical effects that it produces. We struggled with trying to help her, often feeling helpless, frustrated, overwhelmed and scared that she would succumb to it. We were fortunate to have found Hopewell, an Ottawa organization that supported our family and connected us with other families that were living or had lived the same experience. That shared experience kept our family focused on what was important for Kïrsten, even though it so often seemed she did not want our help. Thankfully, Kïrsten overcame the disorder with the support of her family and friends, and also mostly due to her own will to get better. Linda and I are very proud of her, as we are of all of our children, and she is expecting her second child this summer.

Eating disorders are not well understood in our society and they are often treated casually by others, the subject of offhand remarks or thoughtless jokes. We need to eliminate the stigma that those suffering from eating disorders face, to counter the stereotypes and create better awareness for public and for professionals supporting those with eating disorders. We need to understand and address the societal causes that lie at the root of eating disorders, our own perceptions and prejudices about eating disorders, and the body image pressures from external sources, like media, to achieve a perceived beauty ideal.

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We live in a world where children and adults are bombarded daily with images and messages that portray a narrow and exclusive standard of beauty and set up a false and dangerous ideal to be achieved. This bill is an important first step in helping society acknowledge and address our collective role in preventing and supporting those with eating disorders.

My mother used to tell Kïrsten daily that although she was suffering, suffering produces perseverance, perseverance builds character, and character builds hope, and that one day her suffering would allow her to help others and, more importantly, to provide them with hope.

My point in sharing her story is to say that the hope my mother described to Kïrsten exists, and the path to that hope is through greater understanding. We can only achieve that understanding through greater awareness, and that is exactly what this bill sets out to achieve.

I am proud to give it my full support and would urge my colleagues on all sides to do the same.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to be able to rise to speak today on such an important initiative as Bill 189.

I think that we have had the opportunity, in a much greater proportion than we would normally have, for people to tell their personal stories, and I think the reason that they are able to tell their personal stories is because there are so many people.

I know, as a former classroom teacher, that it took a while before you recognized the signs, but you suddenly would realize that a particular girl had to excuse herself at the same time every day subsequent to lunch. Before long it's, "Wait a minute," and by her agitation of not being able to, in any way, run into any interference on that, it became obvious to you that it was a more serious problem.

The bill, if passed, would proclaim the week beginning February 1 in each year as Eating Disorders Awarness Week. Certainly our caucus shares the concerns of individuals and their families who have been affected by eating disorders.

Healthy diets and lifestyle education are important for the overall health of all Ontarians, but eating disorders really are in their own category. They can develop in anyone, regardless of age, race, socio-economic status, gender or ability. I know that in my riding of York–Simcoe, far too many people, particularly young people, struggle with eating disorders. When someone is struggling with an eating disorder, their weight becomes the key focus of their life. It may be either extreme. It impacts their ability to have a meal with friends, enjoy a slice of cake at a birthday party, or snack on popcorn at the movies, and even affects their ability to function as an alert individual.

Healthy meals nourish the body and enable students to learn and employees to work effectively. Unfortunately, calories, grams of fat, and exercise become an all-consuming preoccupation, with school, work, and their social life being negatively impacted. This gives the victim a sense of control and allows them to mask the very real mental illness at its core.

Body image is also a key factor in any eating disorder: the desire to look better, to fit in and to be attractive. It is an all-consuming obsession that seriously endangers their health. Of all the psychiatric illnesses, eating disorders have the highest mortality rate. Eating disorders are a very real mental and physical health concern.

Ontario does not have a system for tracking those who suffer and, as a result, there is no information as to the exact number of those suffering or data on the wait times for those who require treatment. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of stigma, and this bill's purpose is obviously to chip away at that.

The Southlake regional hospital, which serves many members of my community, has a program for children and adolescents struggling with eating disorders. Recognized as a leader in the east central region of Ontario, this program is affiliated with both the University of Toronto and York University. This program has been a feature of Southlake for many years and has served many constituents of mine and their families.

Together, we can help end eating disorders.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate and thank the member for Sudbury for bringing forward this bill to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I also want to thank, in particular, the member for Ottawa–Orléans and the member for Ottawa South for sharing those deeply personal stories, which are so important to this debate.

I wanted to speak to this bill today because, as the member for London West, I have learned that London apparently has a higher incidence of eating disorders among youth in our city than the Canadian average, so this is of concern to me and it's also of interest to understand why that statistic exists.

In addition, as women's issues critic for the NDP caucus, this is very much a gendered issue. We have heard, and it is definitely true, that eating disorders can affect anyone across socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender—male or female—age or income. However, it is primarily a disease that affects women. Eighty percent—sometimes the statistic says as high as 90%—of those affected are female.

The onset typically occurs between the ages of 11 and 14, but as we heard, it can affect children as young as age seven or even earlier, and it can also develop in adults. It has the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. Lifetime mortality rates for anorexia are as high as 20%, and incidence is increasing. In just the last two years, there has been a 42% increase in hospitalizations for girls aged 10 to 19. That's from the 2014 report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women—the research they did on eating disorders.

I want to read a quote from that report. Dr. Blake Woodside, a physician who specializes in treating eating disorders, came to the committee and said, "If anorexia was an illness of middle-aged men, there'd be a clinic in every hospital in this country but because it's a psychiatric illness of young women it's discriminated against."

Clearly, the treatment of eating disorders is badly underfunded, both on the treatment side and also on the support and recovery side.

In my community, there is a wonderful organization called Hope's Garden. It is an eating disorder resource and support centre. It is funded entirely by corporate sponsors through special events and some small foundation grants; there's no government funding whatsoever. There's only a single staff person there, executive director Natasha Newby. They treat 150 individuals every month and provide group support for another 50 individuals at no cost whatsoever. They have seen their numbers climbing over the last three years, and Natasha tells me that while a treatment process is about three months in length, a recovery process can actually take up to seven years. We know there is, many times, up to a two-year wait to access treatment services, but it is those ongoing recovery services that are so important.

I support this bill and look forward to raising awareness, but we also have to ensure that the treatment and supports are there after the awareness is raised.

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

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank all the members who participated in this debate and shared their personal stories. I'd like to use my final rebuttal to read—I have permission—Wendy's daughter Amy's poem. I think this sums up our debate. It goes:

My eating disorder is not ...

It's not a diet nor a lifestyle or a senseless teenage phase
It's not stupid it's not silly nor the latest weight loss craze.

It's not a passion, not a hobby and it is not some twisted game.
It is fatal, yes, it's DEADLY, it's an illness of the brain

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It's not fun and it's not funny, not intentional, not a choice.
It kills you slowly every day and overtakes your voice.

It's not my fault, it's not intentional, not some spiteful sleight of hand.
It's an anxiety-driven fear-based disease that too few understand.

It's not a joke and it's not selfish; it is the furthest thing from vain.
It's a drastic telltale of no self-esteem and unparalleled burning shame.

It's not malicious or dismissive, not distinct to middle-class white girls.
It's a disease like any other, ensnaring every age, class and race 'round the world.

It's not uncommon; it's not weird; it dates back centuries—nothing new.

It's the single most fatal mental illness, which all statistics prove to be true.

Telling an anorexic to "just eat" is like expecting a deaf person to "just talk."
Telling a binge eater to "just stop"
Is like demanding a paraplegic to "just walk."

Telling a bulimic to "just eat normally" is cruel, ignorant and frustrating.
Telling an exercise addict to "just sit down" is like telling schizophrenics "just stop hallucinating."

This illness is biological and genetic; it's like cancer of mind and thought.
It doesn't come from nowhere; you are either born susceptible or not.

If you think this is a ridiculous phase or that we'd be fine if we "just tried,"
Then explain to me the shocking rate of sufferers committing suicide

If EDs were just a stupid choice or you think that we're just lying,
Then why are millions desperate for help while millions more are dying?

That was by Amy Preskow.

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

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority in the event that a company files for bankruptcy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French has moved private member's notice of motion number 73. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to rise in the Legislature and add my voice to the debate, but today is a very special and important opportunity. Today I am here to present and debate my first private member's motion, which calls on the federal government to protect and prioritize pensioners.

Speaker, all Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity, and Ontarians with a workplace pension plan should be able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire.

It's also my privilege to recognize some special guests and supporters who are here with us in the Legislature today. This motion represents the plight of thousands upon thousands of workers in Ontario. Today we are joined by some that have already been affected and by some that want to ensure that no future worker is forced to wonder whether their pension will be there when they retire or not.

Starting with my riding of Oshawa, we have Peter Johnson, who is a General Motors retiree and is here on behalf of the Unifor Local 222 Retired Workers Chapter. We welcome Peter.

On behalf of the GENMO Salaried Pension Organization, we have Mike Powell, Mike Black, Lynn McCullough and Garry Marnoch. GENMO is also an affiliate of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, whom I've been fortunate enough to meet with in preparation for this motion.

As I'm sure you all know from the news, there is no group more affected by this issue currently than the past and current US Steel employees from Hamilton and Lake Erie. Today we are joined by USW Local 1005 president Gary Howe and USW Local 8782 president Bill Ferguson, as well as Ron Wells and Dennis Van Meer, who are all here on behalf of and in support of all their members. We welcome you all to the Legislature and thank you for everything you do to protect the retirement security of workers.

I know my time is limited, so I will get right to it, Madam Speaker. As the MPP for Oshawa, I work every day to represent the interests of my constituents, but I am also the NDP critic for pensions, and today we are here to talk about an issue where those two roles intersect. We are here to discuss pension security and the importance of ensuring that all Ontarians with a workplace pension plan are able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire. Sadly, this is not always the case in Ontario. In this very chamber, we have spoken at length about what needs to be done for future retirees, but we cannot forget about existing pensioners.

Under the current system, pensioners can find themselves at the bottom of the ladder when a company files for bankruptcy. This means that when a pension plan is underfunded and a company enters bankruptcy proceedings, pensioners often take a backseat to bondholders and external creditors during restructuring. As a result, pensioners can see the benefits that they have worked their entire careers for slashed at the time they need them most.

That's what this is about, Speaker: the pensioners. There are a lot of them and they come from a lot of different organizations and companies. I've met with or received emails from concerned or affected pensioners from General Motors, US Steel, Nortel, Sears, Labatt and Fiat Chrysler, just to name a few. These are companies that represent tens of thousands of workers in this province and their employees and pensioners are terrified about what is going to happen to their pension plans.

These individuals have done what they are supposed to do. They have worked their entire lives contributing their own money off of each and every paycheque, yet they can't count on their pension being there when they finally need it.

I've got stacks of emails. I brought one with me and this is one from a retired Sears employee: "The Sears situation is one example where I myself, a 38-year retired employee, will be affected because of the lack of concern and action of the government. The government continues to allow large companies to defer the payments ... into pension plans while all along allowing massive dividends to shareholders and fund managers."

Speaker, that's a real concern. There are many real concerns, like this one from a GM employee who had so little confidence in the pension security system in Ontario that he felt the need to take a commuted value of his pension. He said, "I'm sure you are aware of the ongoing concerns by GM workers, past, present and future, that GM is struggling to keep their pension plan properly funded.... With the risk that my pension could be significantly reduced down the road, I chose the commuted value lump sum. In speaking with fellow retirees over the last couple of years, most have taken the lump sum due to a lack of confidence in the GM pension funding."

This is a significant decision that pensioners should be able to make of their own accord, not under duress and not because of the fear that it is the only way that they will ever see their pension. And pensions are not fringe benefits. They are deferred wages that workers have earned and that have been put aside so they could retire in dignity. Quite simply, this is a matter of fairness. It isn't fair, it isn't right and it has to change.

So today, we are here debating my first private member's motion, which calls on the federal government to prioritize pensioners during bankruptcy proceedings. The motion mirrors a private member's bill first introduced by Jack Layton in 2009 and calls for amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners are given top priority in the event a company files for bankruptcy. This is a federal change, but it affects thousands of pensioners and their families in Ontario, and as representatives of those pensioners, we in this Legislature need to take a stand.

Canada is one of the few countries in the OECD to offer zero protection for pensioners in the event of corporate bankruptcy. Although the Ontario Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund may help soften the blow for some, it does not guarantee that they will get anywhere near the full amount owed to them.

It is unfair and shameful that pensioners may suddenly find their pension cut by upwards of 40% through no fault of their own, simply because their former employer goes into bankruptcy. We saw it happen to employees at Nortel when the company collapsed in 2009, and we are watching it happen to employees of US Steel before our eyes. We want to ensure that no worker in Ontario will be condemned to the same fate in the future. With the US Steel example, we've seen US Steel Canada pay back a loan to its parent company in the United States before funding its pension plan. It is astounding that we have allowed this to happen.

The Liberal governments, both in Ontario and at the federal level, have spoken at length about the importance of retirement security, but retirement security in the province can only be strengthened when no one is left behind and when Ontarians feel confident that the promises made to them will be kept.

Today, we are calling on the government to take a stand and give existing and future pensioners the support they deserve. I am asking the government and the opposition to support this motion because it affects constituents and their families in each and every one of our ridings. This is, fundamentally, about what is right and what is fair.

1450

As always, we as MPPs are not the experts but we have the opportunity to meet with the experts and the affected individuals, and I've done my best to listen. I've met with workers and pensioners, those affected by this issue and those who want to make sure that no one else will be affected. Speaker, I want to make sure that everyone here remembers that it is pensioners who this is really about, so I'm going to finish off with a few statements of support from those who are actually in this fight.

First, from USW Locals 1005 and 8782 on behalf of their members: "For the last seven months, thousands of pensioners and surviving spouses in our communities have suffered physically, financially and emotionally as a result of the shameful elimination of their post-retirement health benefits by US Steel Canada.

"We see their suffering and hear their stories every day. We see pensioners who have exhausted all of their savings and who must now scramble to find the money to buy the prescription drugs they desperately need. We see the retirees who are going without their medication, their treatments and the tests they need, because they cannot afford the cost.

"These pensioners are not asking for handouts. Their benefits and pensions are not gifts bestowed upon them by some benevolent employer. They earned their benefits and pensions during a lifetime of work. They deferred wage gains and made other concessions throughout their working lives, in exchange for receiving decent pensions and benefits during retirement.

"It is unconscionable that the laws of our country allow pensioners to be denied the deferred wages and benefits that they earned. It is equally unconscionable that any of our political leaders, at any level, would not support changing these laws to defend the rights and interests of our pensioners.

"It is time for our elected leaders to stand up for the rights and the dignity of the most vulnerable residents of our communities."

Next, from the GENMO Salaried Pension Organization, on behalf of salaried workers at General Motors:

"GENMO directly advocates on behalf of the 8,000 members of GM Canada's salaried pension plan. As all private defined benefit pension plans share the same security risks we indirectly advocate on behalf of the 1.5

million Canadian families including all 50,000 members of GM Canada's pension plans....

"Companies who choose to file for restructuring or bankruptcy can and do abandon their pension obligations, resulting in significant pension reductions and loss of medical benefits for plan members. Pensioners have little or no ability to recover these losses unlike all of the other stakeholders. Nortel, while not the only example is the best known....

"In our opinion, the best way to accomplish this is to make changes to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the entire pension obligation."

Finally, Madam Speaker, from the Retired Workers Chapter of Unifor Local 222, and on behalf of all retired GM workers in Oshawa, I'd like to read this statement:

"On behalf of the more than 13,000 retirees in the Retired Workers Chapter of Unifor Local 222, I commend you for bringing this motion forward.

"It is long overdue, as we firmly believe that Ontario's pensioners should be given top priority for all benefits (pension and health care) that were promised and negotiated in good faith with the employers over the years.

"On behalf of our membership, we support this motion fully."

Pensioners are not a bottom-rung priority, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they are not treated like one. Everyone deserves to retire with dignity, especially when it comes to pensioners who have worked and saved their entire working lives. It is our responsibility to improve the system and give them the protection that they deserve and need. There is a long way to go, but we have an opportunity today, and I ask that everyone joins me by supporting this motion.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure, as always, to rise in this House and to speak on behalf of pension security. I think it's very important that we recognize the value of people's contributions to pensions and that this is something that's going towards their retirement future. I want to thank the member from Oshawa, who also happens to be my critic, for putting forward this motion today which aims to enhance pension security. I also want to welcome the guests who are here and the retirees who are here. Thank you so much for your service and for your contribution.

This is definitely a worthwhile goal, Madam Speaker, in terms of strengthening overall retirement security, and that is a goal that I support.

As this House knows, our government takes retirement security very seriously. That's why we've been working on enhancements to retirement security. We have made enhancing retirement security one of the key pillars of our economic plan. We believe that after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve to retire with that dignity and with the security that a pension provides.

We know that over the last number of years, defined benefit plan sponsors have and continue to face financial challenges due to the low long-term interest rates. We know that something has to be done to address this situation and that's why our government is currently conducting a review of the current solvency funding framework.

The government has appointed David Marshall, former president and CEO of the WSIB, to lead the solvency funding review with a view to assisting the Ministry of Finance in developing a balanced set of solvency funding reforms.

Reforms will focus on, importantly, planned sustainability, affordability, benefit security, and take into account the interests of pension stakeholders, including sponsors, unions, members and, of course, retirees.

I want to thank once again the retirees who are here today.

We have also established a stakeholder reference group to ensure that reforms to the existing solvency funding framework are informed by different stakeholder perspectives. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this review.

As we move forward with the review, we recognize that we need to take action now to support plan sponsors in the near term. That's why our government plans to introduce temporary changes to pension funding requirements. Temporary solvency funding relief measures introduced in 2009 and 2012 will be extended. For the first valuation report filed in the three-year period, a plan administrator will be able to extend the period for funding a new solvency deficiency from five to 10 years with the consent of active members or their collective bargaining agent, former members and retired members, and extend the consolidation of schedules for funding existing deficiencies.

At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't also talk about the steps that our government is taking to enhance pension coverage to millions of working Ontarians.

Our government sees the value of having security in retirement. I'm proud of our goal to ensure that by 2020, all Ontarians are part of the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan. Study after study has told us that many Canadians are not saving enough for retirement, and without action, this means Ontarians may face a decline in their standard of living in retirement.

The ORPP will help close the retirement savings by creating a secure retirement income floor for Ontarians to rely on. The ORPP will provide Ontarians with a predictable stream of income, indexed to inflation and paid for life, with a survivor benefit that extends to singles. This means that future retirees and their families will have more disposable income to spend in their neighbourhoods, supporting local businesses and their communities.

We believe that after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. That's exactly what we're doing with the ORPP and that's why we're strengthening retirement security overall, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the chance to lend my voice to this call on the federal government to ensure the benefits of pensioners in cases of bankruptcy.

Let me start off the top by saying I know that there is nobody here, no matter what political stripe, who does not support the concept that protections should be in place for pensions and other savings, and there is no one among us who doesn't support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity.

We all know the concerning stories that emerge when companies, large or small, are forced into filing for bankruptcy, leading to impacts for pensioners and other creditors right across the board. We've heard the heart-wrenching tales of hard-working employees at places like Nortel, where 20,000 employees found themselves out of a job and facing an uphill, agonizing battle to try to pry at least some of the secure retirement benefits they had worked so hard for.

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To be clear, it shouldn't take a six-year legal battle to access pension benefits that many have worked their entire life towards. Again, every employee in Ontario should have the right to retire with dignity, and to be clear, ensuring that right was one of the reasons our caucus supported the government's Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, helping to ensure that Ontarians are able to save adequately for their retirement years.

Closer to home, I recall the anxiety and concern of former Budd Canada employees of Kitchener: 1,500 employees who, after the Budd bankruptcy, faced specific concerns over drastic impacts to their health benefits in 2011; retirees ranging in age from the mid-fifties to the early nineties facing the prospect of lost health benefits and being forced to navigate the maze of private insurance companies, despite their years of work to pay into a benefit program that was being phased out.

I don't think anyone wants to see their parents, friends, or family members who have worked so hard their entire lives having nothing there to support them when they enter their retirement years. Those who have worked to earn those supports should have the comfort of knowing that they will be there when retirees need them the most.

As concerning as those stories are, we do have to also acknowledge the concerns that the bill we are debating today may foster, in some corners, concerns that when we start stepping into a system to give more weight to one group of creditors over another, we do risk creating instability that will impact the strong, secure employment we need to provide that strong, secure retirement that we all want. They do go hand in hand: Strong, secure employment ensures the stability of our corporations to provide that strong, secure retirement for the future. In the end, it's about balance to ensure our actions here continue to lead us closer to the time when the secure retirement we've worked toward is a reality for employees across Ontario.

All that said, I want to commend the member for Oshawa for bringing this to the floor today and I look forward to the further steps we can take to support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's always an honour to stand in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents in Kenora–Rainy River.

Today, I rise to speak on my colleague from Oshawa's private member's motion on pension security. I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague for all of her hard work on this file.

This motion calls on the federal government to make pensioners a priority claimant during bankruptcy proceedings. As we know, under the current system, underfunded pension plans are near the bottom of the pile when a company files for bankruptcy, leaving pension benefits at risk.

Really, what this comes down to—three main things stick out for me. Pensions are not fringe benefits; they're deferred wages earned over a lifetime of hard work. The second is that pensioners have worked hard their entire lives and deserve to retire comfortably, with dignity and with peace of mind. The third is that a company should have an obligation to the people who built it, before outside creditors, should a company experience bankruptcy.

I have to say that I've heard from residents in my constituency on the importance of pensions, and being a younger person when I was first elected—29—I have to admit that I wasn't really thinking about my pension all that much. So it really came as a surprise to me and it was really heart-breaking and eye-opening to sit down with hundreds of people in Kenora–Rainy River whose companies had benefited from years upon years of contribution holidays to their pensions, and then, with the company going out of business, having to decide, with the particular solvency ratio, what they should do. Should they cash out their pensions and receive less than they would if they actually continued on? Do they roll the dice? What do they do?

Many people agonized over this, because we're not talking about it being a small difference in the amount of money that they would get if they would have cashed out versus if they would have received their monthly amounts. We're talking tens of thousands of dollars, and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars for people who had been there for a particularly long period of time.

I also found it shocking when I met with people and heard that nobody was immune from this. You could already be retired, you could be looking forward to and have your whole future planned out of how you're going to spend your money and the things you're going to do in your golden age, and have that threatened and potentially ripped away. It's wrong.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this very important motion. I think it's incumbent upon us, as

MPPs, to do what we can to work with the federal government to make sure the changes are in place that provide dignity and respect for pensioners.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's an honour today to stand and speak in reference to the bankruptcy act amendment brought forward by my neighbour to the east, the MPP from Oshawa. I have to tell you that this opinion is part of the House: "The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority." That's a very worthwhile project.

"In the province of Ontario, this can be strengthened when no one is left behind and when promises made are kept." I believe that's a quote from my neighbour to the east of us, the MPP from Oshawa.

The motion calls for the government of Canada to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. Both are federal pieces of legislation. One of the catches is that currently pensioners are not secured claimants, meaning they rank behind the lenders and shareholders when a company declares bankruptcy or, of course, if a company is being restructured. The motion would suggest a significant change in the current system, and that's true.

The proposed change also would give priority to pension claims over the claims of secured lenders. We may want to look at that because they put up their own money and, in many cases, it's their personal savings, lifetime savings. We want to ensure that there is a process where that can be secured, but the main thing that we want to do is look after our elders, our seniors, our pensioners.

The provincial government recognizes that defined benefit plan sponsors continue to face financial challenges due to low long-term interest rates, particularly throughout North America. To assist pension plan and material sponsors in these challenging circumstances, our Ontario government has initiated a review of the current solvency funding framework and that's very, very important.

Two of the previous speakers mentioned US Steel and, of course, previous to that it was Stelco. That's been a scenario that's lingered. Corporately, we want to have it looked after, and it's only appropriate that pensioners be taken care of. I know the Minister of Finance and his officials are engaged in this process to assist pensioners, but there's more than pensioners to this, because when I look at it, I think of a pensioner as a senior, and who couldn't we help more than the seniors of this province?

For me, my mother and father raised 10 children. They never had a pension.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ten? Wow.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ten children. It was great, Doctor. It was the best time of my life, prior to getting married, which has then become the super-best time of my life.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Good call, good call.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate your direction and guidance.

I want to tell you, my father was an entrepreneur. He was the first postman in Ajax. As soon as he got going and was successful, Canada Post came along and instituted the process out of business. So he was out of business, but he knew everybody in town, so he thought, "I'll start a newspaper." He did, a very successful one. It ran for several decades. It got me through and it got the family through. It definitely put food on the table,

Fortunately, with all the brothers and sisters, the 10 of us, we were able to do something for our parents by contributing monthly so that we had an extra $500 a month for mum and dad to be taken care of. They weren't pensioners, but they were seniors, and it's one and the same. We want to do that same thing for everyone in that age classification.

I definitely will support it. I think it's a great motion and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it.

1510

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to the member for Oshawa's motion regarding protecting pensioners, which I'll be supporting. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the retirees who have made the trip here this afternoon.

I'd like to stress that we support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity, and part of this is ensuring that adequate protections for pensions and other savings are in place at every level of government.

Our caucus, for example, supported Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, as one way to help Ontarians save adequately for their retirement years. But we also understand concerns about the rights of creditors in bankruptcy and insolvency situations, and the concerns this may create among investors who, in all cases, must weigh risk.

However, the bottom line is that it can create risk for countless employees and pensioners, should companies not be required to guarantee pension rights. Consequently, borrowing from the member from Oshawa's motion, we need "to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority in the event that a company files for bankruptcy," as retirement security in the province can only be strengthened when no one is left behind and when promises made are kept.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this motion today, brought forward by my colleague the member from Oshawa. It's a very important motion, and I'm very proud to be in a caucus that thinks that bringing these bills forward in their private members' space is important. So, congratulations.

It's important because it's essential that we send a strong message to Ottawa that pensioners and retirees should not be left behind. That's exactly what is hap-

pening today. Thousands of people I represent on Hamilton Mountain are retirees from US Steel. They are some of the 20,000 retirees across our area who have been devastated by the cutthroat decision by US Steel.

For decades, families in Hamilton have worked in the steel mills. They worked hard under difficult conditions. They worked in unbearable heat at work that sometimes could be very dangerous. In the process, they made millions upon millions of dollars for their employers. The company thrived, and Hamilton thrived.

Through their union, the United Steelworkers, the workers at what was then Stelco, negotiated contracts that made the workplace safer and allowed them to live a modest but relatively comfortable life away from the mill. That's not a lot to ask for the time they put in, the dangers they faced and the huge riches they accumulated for their bosses. Those negotiations also set a standard for non-unionized employees in the Hamilton steel industry, whether at Stelco or elsewhere.

When they went into those negotiations, they recognized many years ago that a retirement package was something they needed for their future. So they negotiated language that would defer some of their compensation by putting it into a pension plan that could be accessed at a later date. The employer agreed, they reached an agreement and that was the value of the work being done. The longer you served in the company, the greater the retirement compensation would be.

In 2007, US Steel bought Stelco and, ever since, they have shown complete disregard for their workers and retirees. They have now stripped those same retirees of their health benefits that were part of the negotiated retirement package, and they have made it abundantly clear that they have no intention of honouring the workers' pension entitlements.

Here we have a huge US conglomerate that has come into Canada and decimated our Hamilton steel industry. They are now back in the United States and have manufactured a situation where US Steel, the parent company, is considered to be the main creditor of US Steel Canada.

This whole fiasco has been made much worse because it has been impossible to see the details that have been struck in that deal between US Steel and the federal government, and that would have been the Conservative government before this now-Liberal government. But unfortunately, this Liberal federal government has also refused to open that agreement and to show people the deal that was made in that agreement.

The bottom line is that an agreement was made between the workers and their employers: "You put in your shift, you do your work, and here is what you get in return." The workers fulfilled their part of the deal, some of them over the course of 30, 40 or more years. They gave their entire lives to their company. Now the company is reneging on their part of the deal. They said that the workers would get a particular hourly rate. They said that upon retirement, they would get a monthly pension and their health benefits would be covered. Now the workers are being told that they are out of luck. They are owed those benefits, Speaker, but under the current rules, underfunded pension plans are near the bottom of the list when it comes to companies filing for bankruptcy. This is just plain wrong.

As this motion calls on the federal government to fix that, it will give benefits to the pensioners who are owed their dollars in the top priority. That is the most important piece: that the pensioners become the top priority when it comes to bankruptcy protection.

I've heard from other members in the House already. I know that the member from Oshawa will speak to that. But it concerns me, Speaker, that we have an Associate Minister of Finance who is also responsible for our pension plan who wants to talk about a pension plan going forward in the future but doesn't want to really put much basis into protecting a pension plan that is already in place. So that's greatly concerning for me.

I'm happy to note that I believe the members are supporting it, but we need to make sure that we really have some strong teeth into this and that when we send the message to the federal government, we're sending a clear message and a message of solidarity: that workers in this province deserve what they have worked for, and that is the basis of it. If you have made an agreement, if you have deferred some of your wages to your retirement, then when you reach that retirement age, there is no way that those same wages should be at risk. You've worked for them, you've earned them, and now you deserve to receive them.

I'm really proud of the member from Oshawa for bringing forward this bill. My federal partner, the federal member for Hamilton Mountain, Scott Duvall, is our federal pension critic. He is working alongside the member from Oshawa and working together and bringing everybody together to the table to make sure that we can get this right when it comes to the workers in our province and ensuring that our seniors and our pensioners are getting back what they've earned—their wages—in their pension time. I'm really proud of that work that New Democrats are doing. I would hope that we can count on this provincial Liberal government to take that message back to the federal Liberals and ask them to please make sure that when we're talking about pensions, we do put people as our first priority.

When we're talking about companies, a lot of them these days are coming from other countries, coming into our country and taking over our industries and then walking away and leaving our pensioners, who have worked their entire lives on the basis of an agreement and a deal. We need to ensure that those deals are kept.

I'm hoping that this motion will do the right thing by the pensioners of this province. I'm hopeful that the members will take that message back loud and clear and, quite frankly, that the associate minister responsible for pensions will see that this is an important motion, that this protects the people of the province of Ontario when it comes to pensions, and not just pensions in the future—from the ORPP that people really are going to

have no benefit from for years. For many, many years, people are going to have no benefit from that pension.

1520

We need to ensure that for pensions that are already in place, that the obligations are being met, that we're not allowing other companies from other countries to come in and steal away our manufacturing jobs and shut us down, and then, quite frankly, not give the benefits and the pensions that have been so rightly earned in awful conditions. Working in a steel mill—I've done a tour through US Steel: not nice conditions. It's hot, it's dirty and they are working awfully hard, again, with the expectation that one day they're going to have their pension; and if they unfortunately get ill from being in an environment like that—which many steelworkers have; they have gotten ill from working in those environments—that they have the benefits when they're no longer employed in that position and that they can live their life with some kind of help.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the pensioners who are here with us today.

The member from Oshawa and I share a lot of issues and concerns across our region, and I know that security for pensioners, especially senior pensioners who rely on their pensions for income and benefits, is one that we share regionally and fundamentally.

I think there are numerous and far-reaching influences of this bill. I believe that it makes it difficult to say, as a matter of fact, that it would have a net-benefit impact on the lives of those receiving benefits from their pensions. Chief among them is the concern that pensioners should be a priority over secured lenders. That being said, I am not convinced that the security of those lenders trumps the security of those relying on the pension benefits. In fact, the individuals' and workers' security, for me, is paramount.

We have seen a new federal government in Ottawa. This government is interested in CPP reform, though the road ahead is not clear when it comes to interprovincial consensus. Luckily, when we look at Ontario, we know that our government is bringing forth the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, which will roll out soon and have significant impact on future retirement security.

But for those who are now or soon to be retiring, we have to ensure that what pensions they have are secure. Our population is aging and our constituents have worked hard throughout their lives to make a good income, and many have paid into pension plans their entire lives with the promise that it would be there for them when they needed it most, so that when they retire they can maintain their quality of life and their peace of mind. We need to do what we can, as much as we can, to make sure that those promises are kept and pensioners are safe.

Thank you to the member from Oshawa for this motion. I will be supporting this motion.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to enter into today's debate and add a few comments on ballot item number 40. This ballot items proposes to call on the federal government to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority.

Our position for this comes from our own statement of principles, which reads as follows: "allows every individual freedom of opportunity and initiative and the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of his or her own labour." That may sound sort of flowery, but it's the reality. It means that we look at the kinds of things that are happening and we suggest that they are not living up to those standards.

Part of the problem is the fact that when you look at the pensions that have been in place for a long time, the governments of the day have not kept up to the requirements of those pension initiatives. An example is the question of Nortel. I think there are probably few of us in southern Ontario who haven't had retirees from Nortel or retirees from the car companies and looked at the circumstances that these people found themselves in.

I applaud the member for providing this initiative here as something directed to the federal government, because much of what is contained in this and what is worrisome is exactly in the bailiwick of the federal government.

What has happened over the last few decades has been a change in the kind of structure that a pension plan would have to have. I recall a situation some years ago when a company was being sold and the owners of the company made sure that the pension fund was protected. It was not something that the new owner could look at as part of the sale.

In the time that has passed since then, we have so many issues like unfunded liabilities and people who live longer and retire earlier and have a low return on investments. These are all things that require a lot of effort in terms of legislation to bring them up to date and to give some assurance to people when they're looking at a pension today that it is a deferred payment and that they do have the right to assume that they will retire with the security of that commitment that they've made in their retirement arrangement with an employer.

I think that we need to look at this piece of legislation in some of the details that have been provided to be able to see the kinds of stages that have been left out, that have not been addressed, that have allowed us to be in this position that we find ourselves in today.

In Canada, companies in bankruptcy protection undergo a restructuring process according to the federal Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, a similar process to the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection law. This process enables the company to continue to operate while reorganizing its operations. The court may order the company and its labour unions to negotiate over wages, pensions and benefits but will not dictate any particular outcome.

When a company becomes truly bankrupt, its operations will cease, its remaining assets will be sold off and

pension funds will be wound up. This legal process is governed by a different piece of legislation, the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, and is often where significant problems begin.

When a company enters either of these, pensioners are often left wondering if existing assets in the pension plan protect them from the creditors of the sponsoring company.

These are just some of the situations that people find themselves in. The result is that it gives a super-priority status ahead of secured creditors. Further, if the pension fund is underfunded at the time the sponsoring company becomes bankrupt, the pension fund will be seen as an unsecured creditor in respect of the funding deficiency.

What should we be doing? Well, we support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity. Ensuring that reasonable protections for pensions and other savings are in place at every level of government is part of that, and I think that's why we have to be here today providing some support for this private member's bill so that people in Ottawa accept their responsibility.

Our caucus supported the government's Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, as one way to help Ontarians save adequately for their retirement years.

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We understand concerns about the rights of creditors in bankruptcy and insolvency situations, and concerns this may create among investors, who in all cases must weigh risk.

The best way for Ontarians to have a strong and secure retirement is to have strong and secure employment, which, given current energy rates and the red tape burden implemented under this government, is at risk.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Oshawa to wrap up this round of debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate all of the thoughtful comments from my colleagues around this Legislature. I'm very pleased to be able to present this motion to call on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the BIA and the CCAA. This is a very personal issue. I don't see this as partisan; I see it as personal. It's personal to those who have worked their entire working lives. It is personal to their families. It is personal to their communities.

Everyone—as we know, and we've heard today, as we've been hearing for months—deserves to retire with dignity. That dignity incorporates peace of mind, not just about being able to pay the bills. It's about being able to count on receiving the benefits that they are due. It involves paying bills, yes, but feeding their families and living in comfort—the comfort that they have earned. These are deferred wages that we're talking about when we're talking about pension benefits. People deserve to be able to participate in their communities and to be able to afford their prescriptions. People should be able to receive what they have earned.

We've heard from the Associate Minister of Finance today, and again, she talks about the importance of a predictable stream of income. Well, what about a predictable pension? Those pensions that exist need to exist. They need to continue existing. They need to be what people can count on. Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. This is about fairness. This is about what's right. We, as a Legislature, have the opportunity today to call on the feds to do the right thing.

We talk at length here about secure futures—and I'm glad to—about secure retirement and about future pensioners, but we need to always keep in mind our current pensioners. Those are the real people we're talking about. The real people in Hamilton, we know they're made of strong stuff, but no one should be put through such unfairness, and we support them in their continued fight. Pensioners at GM and across the province deserve to be able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire. I hope that everyone will support this motion.

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

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEP OUR ROADS SAFER THROUGH THE USE OF INTELLIGENT DRIVE TECHNOLOGIES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE ACCRUE GRÂCE À L'EMPLOI DE TECHNOLOGIES DE CONDUITE INTELLIGENTE)

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to lifesaving technologies / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les technologies permettant de sauver des vies.

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

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: This bill is about lifesaving technologies, about saving lives, as the heading of the bill states. Any life we can save, it's worth it, because when there's an accident, it impacts the life of the children and it affects the life of the families. I think all the actions we should take is to make sure that we can save lives.

Let me give you some background. Canada is one of the top-performing nations worldwide in terms of road safety, and Ontario's roads continue to be among the safest in North America. In Canada, Ontario is ranked first among all other provinces in terms of lowest traffic fatalities. We are proud of our safety record and need to build further on our super record.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the unsafe road is a major cause of injuries and fatalities, which are predicted to increase if road safety is not addressed adequately from time to time by the public governance. According to

the World Health Organization, without increased evolutionary efforts and new initiatives based on advanced technology, the total number of road traffic deaths and injuries worldwide are forecast to rise by some 65% between 2000 and 2020. Road traffic crashes are predicted to result in the deaths of around 1.9 million people annually by 2020. In economic terms, the cost of road crash injuries is estimated at roughly 2% of the GDP in high-income countries. In view of this, it has been suggested that the safe design of vehicles and roads is considered to be the key to make roads safer and reduce injuries and fatalities.

It is also a widely held belief that human error is a factor in some 90% of road crashes. Safe human behaviour is governed not only by individual knowledge and experience but also by the environment in which the behaviour takes place. Environmental factors include the design and layout of the road, nature and safety technology of the vehicles, and traffic laws and their enforcement. Technological advancement in recent times has opened new horizons for dynamic safety systems.

The paradigm of road-safety-related efforts, therefore, has gradually shifted to influence human behaviour through technologically innovative systems. Safe vehicle mobility is getting connected with the information and communication technology at a very fast rate. The use of information and communication technology is intended to reduce human error and respond quickly either to avoid the accident or crash and/or reduce its severity.

While market forces can help advance in-car safety in individual car models, the aim of synchronizing legislative standards of vehicle design is to ensure an even and acceptable level of safety across all vehicles. Further, current legislative safety system requirements also need improvement from time to time in the light of technological advancement.

With this background information, let me explain the key amendments that are being proposed in this legislation to the Highway Traffic Act.

The proposed legislation has two amendments. The first amendment relates to improving safety—this is, again, I want to say, all about improving safety and saving lives—by incorporating collision avoidance systems and intelligent drive technology in future vehicles. Collision avoidance systems and intelligent drive technologies refer to technologies designed to improve safety, such as proximity sensors, physical signals and cameras that assist the driver of the motor vehicle in helping to avoid or mitigate a crash.

These technologies may include, but are not limited to, any of the following examples:

—front crash prevention or avoidance technology systems that alert the driver when the motor vehicle is in danger of colliding with an object in front of it;

—lane departure warning technology systems that alert the driver if the motor vehicle is drifting from its lane;

—adaptive headlight technology systems that assist the driver in seeing road curves and over hills and bends during nighttime driving or in low-light conditions. Adaptive headlights turn their beams according to your steering input so that the vehicle's path is lit up;

—blind spot detection technologies available these days that notify the driver of obstructions in his or her blind spot, or that provide visual monitoring of a motor vehicle's blind spot;

—automatic parking and park-assist technologies that assist drivers in backing up a motor vehicle: a parking space recognition system, including parking area recognition, used with the help of image recognition. It determines the parking space and executes automatic parking; and

—pothole sensors. Currently, there are technologies available that can detect potholes. These technologies not only improve road safety but also avoid damage to vehicles.

There are technologies that provide visibility around the motor vehicles, such as:

—advanced cameras, including new stereoscopic cameras. It is mounted on the windshield below the rear-view mirror. It allows Intelligent Drive to recognize the 360 degrees around the vehicle. It can analyze the difference between two images and more accurately detect objects ahead and determine their size and distance.

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We also have lidar sensors. It is simply referred to as laser scanning or 3-D scanning with airborne and mobile applications. It is a combination of light and radar. With its foresights long, short and medium range, lidar scans the environment in front of the car, behind it and out from the rear corners. It can perform robustly in all environments.

Overhead-view camera monitors help to augment the field of vision around the vehicle. It detects approaching obstacles from any direction in combination with an image recognition system and warns the driver accordingly.

All of these technologies fall in the category of active or dynamic safety.

The key objective here is to focus on sensing dangerous situations and attempting to prevent damage or injury together. It utilizes information that can be obtained from the vehicle's surroundings, including traffic, road configuration and conditions, and nearby objects, and works together with passive safety features to mitigate damage in the event of an unavoidable collision.

The second part of the proposed legislation deals with post-collision/accident rescue safety technology. It has been frequently observed that when there is an accident, the first-responder teams find it difficult to extract victims out of the car because they don't have the technical information available to them about the vehicle involved in the crash. Also, there's a lack of resources which provide information about where the gas lines are, or whatever technical information is required for them to extract the people who are in the accident out of the car.

The aim of the proposed post-crash technology is not only to limit further severity of injury and suffering

caused by accidents, but also to extract victims safely and quickly from vehicles for the best possible emergency medical facility.

Technologies such as QR codes, which are quick response codes—these are technologies developed by Mercedes—can assist first responders in assessing technical information about the motor vehicle. QR code technology provides technical information about the structure of the vehicle and can be accessed through smart phones, which everybody has these days. QR codes installation should be made mandatory to assist first responders in accessing technical information about motor vehicles quickly and to eliminate the guesswork.

Currently, safety-driven intelligence technologies are available in most high-end vehicles. However, due to the ongoing growing advancement and constant reduction in cost of these technologies, we should make them available in all vehicles. These technologies can reduce accidents, save lives and continue to keep our roads safer.

When purchasing a vehicle, we pay considerable attention to outside colour and interior décor, but sometimes very little to the safety features. In brief, the proposed intelligent systems enable quick execution of the technically desired action and provide extended value beyond safety, such as comfort and convenience.

It is possible that to incorporate all these safety provisions in vehicles may require us to work closely with Transport Canada. I would strongly urge our Ministry of Transportation to take up this matter with Transport Canada and work together to speed up the incorporation of these advanced Intelligent Drive technologies in all new vehicles sold in Ontario by 2020.

As always, I'm open to all constructive suggestions to make the proposed legislation better to continue to keep Ontario roads safer.

I would like to read a Mowat report, which recently said, "Despite significant improvements in safety, every year approximately 2,000 Canadians are killed in car accidents, with many more injured and significant economic costs incurred. The vast majority of these accidents can be attributed to human, rather than mechanical, error and automated technology presents an opportunity to avoid them."

Not only does the Mowat research report talk about it but even the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the US advocates almost the same thing.

I'm looking forward to a constructive discussion so that we can talk about how we can save more lives and how we can make our roads much safer. As the Minister of Transportation, as I was for almost three years, I had the opportunity to incorporate a few of these changes, but I think the technology changes all the time and my colleagues after me have done the same. We need to constantly work on these things so that we can continue to save lives and help our families by making our roads safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Mississauga–Erindale. Now turning to the opposition, the MPP for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Erindale, who has brought forward Bill 192 in an attempt to enforce the inclusion of life-saving technologies in all automobiles registered in this province by 2020. I did mention in an earlier debate that we were considering, and we are considering now, a second bill that does cross over into federal jurisdiction. That is what we are talking about here, legislation that would in fact step into the setting of vehicle standards, standards which are currently and have always been regulated under the federal mandate of Transport Canada.

But before I get into that, I want to start by indicating that all of us in the PC caucus support initiatives to improve the safety of motorists on Ontario roadways. In fact, we have a long history of supporting and introducing enhanced safety measures. In 1976, it was a Conservative government under Bill Davis that brought in the first seat belt legislation to protect motorists and passengers alike. It was just last year that we threw our support behind Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, to take on distracted driving and address the growing impacts to safety on roads and highways right across this province.

Much as Bill 31 dealt with the impacts of emerging technologies, we understand the need to ensure that as our society moves forward and new technology comes on stream impacting or enhancing safety, we must work to move our legislation forward to reflect the new reality.

All that said, I think there is a need to understand how our decision-making in this House will impact on our roadways, if our discussions here will lead to the enhanced safety we're seeking or if, in effect, we're just spinning our wheels. Frankly, after discussing this with many of our road and vehicle stakeholders, manufacturers and safety partners included, I think there is a very real risk we may be engaging in more wheel-spinning and less safety enhancement.

Speaker, while the province does have jurisdiction to set transportation safety standards, manufacturers and stakeholders I've spoken to question the ability of the province to step into vehicle standards setting, which, as I noted off the top, is traditionally a federal jurisdiction of Transport Canada. Vehicle standards are in the federal realm for a very good reason. As manufacturers in my area have told me regarding the prospects of provincial steps into that traditional federal territory, it's already difficult enough to ensure we have matching legislation between the US and Canada to allow for seamless manufacturing of vehicles in both countries. It would only further complicate things if individual governments started developing individual policies at a provincial, state or jurisdictional level.

Just imagine the additional burden created on manufacturers to have multiple specifications for a particular vehicle platform, depending on the province in which they wish their vehicles to be sold. Imagine the related increased costs to manufacturing due to the increased complexity, costs that would ultimately have to be absorbed or passed along to the consumer.

Further, Speaker, the fact is that a lot of this implementation of advanced safety technology can be done, in fact is already being done, by working with manufacturers, as opposed to working to penalize them—the carrot as opposed to the stick.

In speaking with our local Toyota manufacturer, based just outside of my riding in Cambridge, I'm told that many of the technologies the proposed legislation references relating to collision avoidance system/intelligent drive technology are actually either already available in Toyota vehicles today or will have been adapted within this calendar year.

So there is a question as to whether we are discussing a solution rather than looking for a problem.

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Take the Toyota example of a pre-collision system. Again, this is a system already being implemented on current models. It detects vehicles on the road ahead, with a single-lens camera and laser radar, and also helps the vehicle avoid or take reduced damage from collisions. When the system is alerted to the possibility of collision, the driver is alerted with both audio and visual warnings. Once action is taken, if the driver's pressure on the brake is insufficient, the system is triggered to assist. If there is no application of the brake by the driver whatsoever, the system automatically applies the brake itself.

Similarly, when it comes to unwanted lane departures, current Toyota models coming off the line today are already being fitted with enhanced technology to improve safety.

Then there's the lane departure alert system that uses an on-board single-lens camera to detect the vehicle's position relative to the white or yellow lane markings. When the car begins to leave the lane without turn signal activation, the driver is warned—again, with an audible and visual alert. It's the same story with pedestrian detection, dynamic radar cruise control and automatic high beams—all important new safety technology advances already being implemented, or on their way to being implemented, by Toyota and other car manufacturers on their new models rolling onto our roads across Ontario.

I'm not sure why we're asking the LG to investigate and prescribe the latest safety technologies that our manufacturing partners are already well down the road of implementing themselves. And I'm not sure why we're proposing a penalty-based approach, threatening fines to auto manufacturers who are already doing their part in ensuring that vehicles on our roadways are suited up with the latest in advanced technology.

Again, Speaker, the idea that vehicles in Ontario should include the latest safety technology to protect motorists and pedestrians alike is a concept we can all get behind. I just question whether coming at it with penalty-laden provincial legislation actually makes sense.

Furthermore, there are very real concerns over the ability of government to actually enforce this legislation, specifically when it comes to fining of motorists themselves. Not only does Bill 192 call for the setting of fines to be paid by a manufacturer of motor vehicles not in compliance with the latest safety technology by 2020, it also calls for fines to be levied on the motor vehicle operator if their vehicle is not in compliance.

As one manufacturer noted in my office, this sets the stage for an enforcement nightmare, where drivers with vehicles only a couple of years old face fines for lacking a safety technology aspect that wasn't available before this new legislation and its prescribed technologies were set in stone. How would they be detected anyway? Would police be actively looking for evidence of vehicles without collision avoidance systems? Just what would that look like?

Speaker, I think there are many ways our police officers could help enhance safety and enforce road safety other than having them setting up a safety technology spot-check on hapless motorists whose only crime is driving an older vehicle. All that said, we in the PC caucus have a long history of supporting and introducing provincial legislation aimed at enhancing safety on Ontario highways.

With that, I know my colleague from Perth–Wellington is eager to get into this debate. I look forward to the discussion from the third party and the government.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): For further debate, I'm now turning to the NDP and the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill.

First, though, I have to say that I was very impressed by the comments by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I won't come even close to the technical appreciation or assessment that he has put forward. I think he went into the matter in depth and brought a lot of good background information.

The member from Mississauga–Erindale: I think your approach is a laudable approach. You outlined in great detail the risk to human health, the risk to human life, in not in fact making vehicles as safe as possible. You talked about the larger context of making sure that road design was good, that the rules and regulations were sensible. There are many factors that feed into safety on the road, cars being part of it but certainly not 100% of it.

This bill, as has been said, will give the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to mandate that prescribed motor vehicles registered on or after January 1, 2020, be equipped with prescribed "collision avoidance systems/intelligent drive technologies, post-collision/accident rescue safety technologies or both or any other such life-saving technologies...."

It's a pretty comprehensive bill. I think the fact that you're reaching out into the manufacturing sector—there are questions that are raised about jurisdiction. I think the member for Kitchener–Conestoga explored that. It will be useful to hear your follow-up comments, because I think there are practical difficulties with implementation, and I would be curious to see exactly how you will address those.

In my previous experiences I've worked with the former leader of the NDP, Jack Layton, on climate and energy efficiency issues. We were very interested in what California had done about energy efficiency—the need to drive auto technology so that cars have much better fuel consumption. What we found is that it's very difficult in Canada to shape what the market will be in the United States. California is a very different animal. It's got a population the size of Canada, an economy probably about the same size, but it does not have an auto industry. It's a buyer. It can say, "Here's a huge market. If you want to be in this market, these are the standards you have to meet."

We're in a very different situation. I was meeting with a representative from General Motors the other day, talking cap-and-trade, as a matter of fact, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He's an interesting representative. He said to me—and I had known this sort of vaguely before—that about 90% to 95% of the vehicles we produce are exported. So what we produce is something that has to be accepted in the markets that are going to be taking those cars in. It's that reality that we produce and we sell. We aren't the buyer who determines how manufacturers are going to shape their product. We're a seller. We have to make sure we conform with what the buyer wants.

I've seen this before in Canada when we've had the debate on efficiency. In the end, it's a question of, is that going to fit with where the United States is at? Because if it doesn't, our manufacturers aren't going to retool. It's as simple as that. I'm curious to see how this will work in tandem on a North American basis with American legislators and the standards that they want to set. We aren't going to be in a position—we don't have the luxury of setting a standard for what is really, in North American terms, a very small market. It has to be accessible across the continent.

I know that governments have been criticized before, and rightly, for not moving forward on energy efficiency in the vehicle sector, but I have to say that Canada, in the end, will follow what the Americans do, and Ontario just as much. We will follow what the Americans do. It will be the federal government that will make this decision. I'm curious as to how you put those pieces together.

We do have the ability in Canada, in Ontario, to address some other safety issues. We could have put side guards under large trucks, and that's something that hasn't happened. This is not really high-tech, and it's something you can do on an after-market basis. A truck comes into Ontario, manufactured no matter where; you can take it into a shop, put side guards, and put it out on the street. We could be doing that now, and it's something that has been called for a number of times for protection of cyclists. I understand the interest in going high-tech, but let's do some low-tech in an area where we have the jurisdiction and the authority to act now.

I'm curious as to the practical steps that the member has for seeing this implemented. Right now, I have substantial questions. I think the member from Kitchener–Conestoga raised a lot of those. I hope that in the course of this debate we can look at other elements of safety, but in the end, Speaker, through you, the member has to show in practical terms how that would be implemented for us to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm going to take a bit of a different approach. I know we heard criticism about what the manufacturers think and what the Americans think. I think we have to think about Ontario motorists, Ontario pedestrians, and their safety.

I think what the member from Mississauga–Erindale is all about is he's saying, "How can we prevent unnecessary deaths and accidents on Ontario roads?" This is the key crux of his initiative here. It's like every private member's bill: It's a developing process. There's discussion; there are changes; there's, hopefully, committee, where we can examine some of the implications of how to implement some of the intentions in the bill.

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As you know, the issue before most Ontarians right now is, they say, "I would love to have all of these added safety features, but I can't afford them." Therefore, safety, in many cases, as a result of what the manufacturers—the way they treat safety is, it depends on your pocketbook. If you've got the money, you can buy safety. That shouldn't be the case. I think that's the premise of the member's bill: that safety shouldn't be a pocketbook, first-come, first-served issue. If certain technologies save lives, they should be available. He's trying to put a framework about how to enhance safety in the manufacturing of future vehicles, whereas, right now, as I said, those who can afford them can have all the safety devices. Those who can't afford the safety devices don't have the features, like the lane departure technology. They don't have all these critical, expensive features that others can get. "Can we afford a backup camera? Can we afford the devices that anticipate potholes, the front-crash prevention technology, the adaptive headlights, the blind spot detection? Oh, we can't afford the blind spot detection. It's an added feature. Only Mercedes-Benzes and Lexuses have it." We have to think about people who drive Fords and Chevys. That's what the member is trying to do. He's trying to say that we in this Legislature should not just think of the Americans in California and we shouldn't just think of the manufacturers; let us put safety on their agenda. Let them start thinking of ways of making these safety features available to all Ontarians, not just the wealthy. Right now, that is what is happening. You can't afford a lot of these safety features.

Also, there's the whole thing about if you do get in an accident, the first responders can't detect how to extract you because the gas lines are so complex. So that is a very good suggestion that he has in his bill.

Whether we discuss and dialogue with other provinces or with the federal government, that is what this bill is all about: starting these discussions.

Let's not bury our heads in the sand like we did with seat belts. There were so many people who were saying,

"I'll never wear a seat belt. It's against my civil rights." How many lives have seat belts saved?

I remember how at one time only the rich could afford airbags. Now I think all cars have airbags.

The manufacturers can do it, but we have to encourage them. We have to work with them.

The member is trying to put these very important safety concepts—he's trying to change the paradigm here. We should be driving the safety agenda, not the people at Toyota. We should be driving it, and let them work with us.

Sure, it has some technical issues with jurisdiction, perhaps, but those things can be worked out.

We have to say that we want affordable safety technology that's available to all Ontarians and not just the ones who buy a Mercedes or Lexus and all these things. Let the poor, let the working man and woman, let the small business person afford basic technology that saves lives, saves money and makes our roads safer.

That's why I think this bill is worth supporting. Let it go forward with some debate. Talk to the manufacturers. Talk to the Californians. Let's try to make our roads safer.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a short time to speak, and I appreciate the time.

I have an article here from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. This was announced a little while ago. It was about installing automatic emergency brakes on all US vehicles by the year 2022. How many vehicles are made in the United States that come to Canada? This is going to be an issue if we want these collision avoidance systems on our cars before that. It covers all kinds of vehicles, from General Motors to BMW to Mazda. It covers all kinds of models of cars and makes of cars. So I can see an issue in this bill with getting the United States to come on board with this type of thing, especially with the amount of cars that are imported from the United States into Canada. They would have to install quite a bit of this technology in order to export their vehicles here. It could involve a significant impact on trade between our two countries in the car industry.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is the city of Stratford in my riding. They have installed all kinds of infrastructure to make the roads talk to lights that talk to cars. They're going to start testing this technology soon, but I don't think a time frame now of four years is going to allow for some of this stuff to be tested properly. Years ago, Stratford launched a city-wide wi-fi project, and it laid 50 kilometres of fibre-optic cable and installed wireless antennas across the city. Soon after, tech companies came looking for a real-world arena in which to test their products. They have always had to go somewhere else to test product, Canadian cars; they have had to go to California or someplace to do this. Now we have a place in Stratford, Ontario, with this technology that they have installed. As their mayor, Dan Mathieson, said, we're the petri dish now for this new technology.

Now Stratford hopes to take advantage of new provincial rules governing the testing of autonomous cars—that is, cars that drive themselves down the road and also have many of the safety features that the member opposite has been talking about in his bill—so that we can test them close to home, and certainly in winter conditions, as we all enjoy in this province.

The time frame that the member is talking about in this bill is an issue. We have all kinds of auto parts manufacturers in this province right now—Toyota, Honda; a couple are located in my riding. How do we gear up fast enough for this change to laws if it comes through? I certainly know there are going to be some issues with the federal jurisdiction. But I think a lot of the technology is here. It's the testing of it; it's places to test these vehicles. We're very fortunate that Stratford has looked ahead and we can move forward on this, but I really do believe that the time frame is one of the biggest issues here, especially when we're competing with the United States in the car manufacturing industry.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Its stated purpose, as it says in the title, is to ensure the use of life-saving technologies.

Like others in this House, I drive highways in this province quite regularly. One of them that I drive on the most is the QEW. It's a busy road, and one of the most congested in North America. Unfortunately, I see a lot of accidents on that road. Sometimes it's a fender-bender, but sometimes it's a lot worse. There was a news report at the tail end of last year which said that traffic fatalities in Toronto in 2015 were at the highest level in five years. Another report said that Hamilton had 17 traffic fatalities last year: lives lost, hearts broken, families left behind and lives changed forever.

So, yes, Speaker, I'm in favour of doing whatever we can to make sure our roads are safer—safer for drivers and their passengers, safer for cyclists and safer for pedestrians. But I'm not sure how much can be accomplished with this bill.

Firstly, the bill says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations." There's no directive to make regulations. We're only opening up the possibility of regulations being made, so who knows when that might be done or what will be done?

1610

There are certainly a lot of new technologies that are becoming better and, as is usually the case, cheaper. Experimental driverless cars, from what I understand, are on North American roads as we speak. I don't know what it would be like to sit in one without having complete control of a vehicle, but it certainly points to how far the technology has come.

But does Ontario have the jurisdiction to dictate these rules? Automotive manufacturing standards come under the jurisdiction of the federal government, although Ontario does have the ability to mandate additional safety equipment or retrofits, and Ontario already has that

authority. I'm not sure that this bill changes anything in that regard.

It isn't clear to me how the provincial government could implement this bill in practice, but there are a number of things that could be done to make our roads safer, things that are clearly within the province's jurisdiction.

Some time ago, I met with a constituent who raised concerns about tinted windows being a problem. I looked into the matter and found out that, unlike other jurisdictions, Ontario has no law governing how much a car window could be tinted. I wrote to the Minister of Transportation asking that he investigate how we might regulate tinted windows, especially as we knew that there was a crackdown needed to be happening at that time on the use of cellphones while driving.

When Bill 31 was introduced, there was no mention of it, and I argued for it to be included during the debate. The NDP put forward an amendment at committee to include it in the bill. Unfortunately, the amendment failed and we still don't have any rules about how much car windows can be tinted.

Speaker, that's just one example of a simple thing that could be done to make our roads safer, and I wish the government would have listened at that time.

I congratulate the member for thinking outside the box and for bringing this bill forward. I will be supporting it, but as I said, I think there's a lot that we can do that is within Ontario's jurisdiction. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm happy to stand up today to speak to the Highway Traffic Act amendment proposed here today to keep our roads safer through the use of intelligent drive technologies. I think this would be an opportunity for a lot of our vendors and a lot of the auto sector to go ahead and make these changes that would make sure that people are safer when driving.

A majority of us spend a lot of time on the road. I'm on the road almost six hours a day through my commute, and I understand how difficult it can be sometimes to remain safe. You see so many little things happen that happen due to human error, as the member said earlier. If those things are avoidable through the use of technology, it would be great to put these technologies into play and have these safety features available in vehicles.

I think that safety features—

Interjection.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Pardon? You're distracting.

Some of these safety mechanisms are going to be very helpful to us. You can see that there will be a number of things that they'll do to prevent accidents and fatalities on our roads. It will make our roads safer, and that's been a goal of our government, to ensure that we have safer roads and safer highways, and make everybody's commute safer.

Looking at the front-crash prevention/avoidance technology systems would help a lot of cars slow down and be able to avoid the smaller fender-benders or bumper accidents.

If we look at the lane departure warning systems, they'll help avoid doing lane changes—that will be very helpful to people who are driving on the highways. Our highways are busy. We're a growing province and we need to have these safety mechanisms in play to ensure that everybody is safe on the roads. If there's something that we can do to avoid human error, why would we not go ahead and move forward with that? I think this is a great opportunity for manufacturers to look at some of these things and to work on them so that they have these things available.

I personally do have a back-view camera in my car, and it is helpful to be able to reverse-park and to be able to park in smaller spots, especially being downtown. Sometimes there are spots you must park in, and that makes it a lot easier.

These safety mechanisms that have been put into play have been helpful in making our roads safer. If we continue to add things to our vehicles, it would be helpful to all drivers, whether it be new drivers who need the extra cushioning of having safety features or whether it be everybody who is on the road.

I think the after-accident technology that was talked about would be great as well, because it would help save lives. The post-collision accident rescue safety technologies could help save a lot of families a lot of heartache. There is very little that first responders can do when they get there, but if they have this technology available to them, it would be something that would assist them and make their job easier and help save numerous lives.

Looking, also, at pothole detectors, I know that when you go up some of our streets and highways, potholes can be a cause of accidents and a cause of damage to vehicles. All of these accidents impact our insurance rates and such things, which are important to the residents of Brampton–Springdale. If we could avoid accidents, we'd have lower insurance rates and safer roads, and it would make it easier for drivers, young and old, to be on the road. It would make it more cost-effective for them to be on the road.

Some of the other members did speak about technology not being only for people who can afford it. We want everybody to be safe on the roads. It's important that everybody have access to vehicles that can offer this technology, not only people who are buying higher-end vehicles and can afford higher-end vehicles. It's only fair that everybody have equal access to being safe on the road. We continue to promote different ideas to bring safety to our roads.

I looked at a number of the other things that were included in this bill, and I think it would be a great time to go ahead. With technology changing as quickly as it is, we're lucky to have access to all of these new methods of being safe and bringing safety to our roads. So why would we not move ahead and have these things implemented? It will take some time for testing, no doubt, but

those technicalities can be worked on as we move forward with these proposed amendments.

The blind spot detection technology system will notify the driver of obstructions in his or her blind spot. It provides visual monitoring of a motor vehicle's blind spots, making lane changes easier, making it easier to drive on the highway, making it easier to make better lane changes and make better choices, making it easier for drivers. I think that, all in all, applying these technologies and having them accessible for everybody—for all drivers—will make our Ontario roads and highways safer. As well, it will make people safer and make it easier to be on the road. I will be fully supporting this bill.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to participate in the debate on Bill 192, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Keep our Roads Safer through the use of Intelligent Drive Technologies). This bill requires that prescribed motor vehicles be equipped with prescribed collision avoidance systems, otherwise known as intelligent drive technologies, as of January 2020. It also gives cabinet the power to determine which vehicles are prescribed and which systems are to be included. It goes on to say that manufacturers and drivers who do not comply with the provisions of the act can be fined.

Certainly, New Democrats are strongly supportive of any measures to improve road safety and protect Ontarians from injury on the road. However, we have questions whether this bill, as it is currently written, will actually achieve these goals. We know, as others have pointed out, that the bill kind of wades into federal jurisdiction by regulating automotive manufacturing standards; in other words, by requiring automotive manufacturers to include certain equipment. There is a jurisdictional question about provincial authority to make that kind of requirement on automotive manufacturers.

Also, as has been pointed out, there are certain things that the government could do now—very simple fixes—to improve road safety. Truck sidebars have been mentioned; tinted windows have been mentioned. Snow tires are another—we know that snow tires are mandatory in Quebec, but they are still optional in Ontario. Requiring the installation of winter tires could certainly help reduce collisions in icy road conditions.

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As I said, we have questions about the ability of this bill to actually achieve what it sets out to do. We would encourage the government to move forward with some of the immediate initiatives that could really help to address road safety issues in the near term rather than the longer term.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to start by congratulating my colleague from Mississauga–Erindale for bringing forward the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Keep our Roads Safer through the use of Intelligent Drive Technologies), 2016.

I know there has been some light criticism of this bill, but what I think is really important to remember when discussing this bill is that we've started a new conversation about safety. Absolutely, there have to be some things that may need to be ironed out, but I think it's a great start.

One of the most interesting facts mentioned was that a lot of these safety measures are available in high-end vehicles. That seems to be quite unfair, because all lives are equal and there should be no reason that normal, small or mid-sized cars shouldn't have these life-saving devices.

As well, there is the option to have this technology card which would identify things such as where the gas lines are so the first responders can quickly come to the accident scene and possibly save lives.

I commend my colleague, and I hope the entire House will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Mississauga–Erindale to wrap up.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: When I spoke originally, I said that I would look forward to some constructive suggestions, which I haven't heard.

But first of all, I want to thank all the speakers who spoke on this bill, who talked about and raised some issues.

In my mind, safety should be our first concern, and we as legislators should be driving that agenda. That is our responsibility. It's our responsibility to make sure that roads are safe. It is our responsibility to make sure that fatalities on the road can decrease constantly.

The technologies that I have mentioned—and some speakers said this already—are already here. The only problem is that these technologies are only available in the high-end vehicles. In the low-end vehicles, these technologies are not incorporated. So it looks like it becomes that the lives of the rich are more important than the lives of the people who cannot afford expensive cars.

Interjection: All lives are important.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I think all lives are important, and we need to take all the steps to ensure that.

In my mind, a little nudging to the manufacturers to make sure that these technologies are available in all vehicles is not a bad idea. I would like to encourage all manufacturers to move ahead and provide these technologies in all vehicles.

The issue of jurisdiction has been raised. Maybe there is an issue that we need to work on with the other levels of government, both at the federal level and also at the North American level. But that shouldn't stop us from saying that we are now going to advocate for technologies that can save lives. That's why I am actually advocating for this bill. Technologies change, and we should constantly evaluate these technologies and should do everything possible to make sure that we can incorporate technologies that can save lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for private members' public business has expired.

EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX TROUBLES DE L'ALIMENTATION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 39, standing in the name of Mr. Thibeault.

Mr. Thibeault has moved second reading of Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member. Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is now referred to?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

PENSION PLANS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French has moved private member's notice of motion number 73.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Congratulations.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEP OUR ROADS SAFER THROUGH THE USE OF INTELLIGENT DRIVE TECHNOLOGIES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE ACCRUE GRÂCE À L'EMPLOI DE TECHNOLOGIES DE CONDUITE INTELLIGENTE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 192, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to lifesaving technologies.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill will be referred to?

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the will of the House to send this to that committee? Carried.

Congratulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's indeed a pleasure to resume the debate on Bill 135. When I spoke about this last, I went through a number of points that I thought were problematic to this whole bill. Certainly, one of them was that there was no requirement for the minister to hold consultations with Ontarians or people within the energy sector. The bill only suggests groups, later writing that the minister must consult with groups "that the minister considers appropriate given the matters being addressed by the long-term energy plan."

I want to refer the House to an article on this bill that I found, by Canadian Energy Perspectives. In it, it says, "It is in direct control of every policy instrument available. From a governance perspective, it could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all."

It goes on to say, "What is the residual independent authority of the agencies? The OEB and the IESO (and the OPA before it) were established to use their independent processes and statutory objectives to implement the broad objectives of energy policy as reflected in legislation. If they are now to solely implement government plans and directives, then what is the value of their independent fact-finding and judgment in the implementation of their statutory objectives?"

This is certainly a problem, Madam Speaker.

"For example, the IESO has been urging a greater reliance on markets both for energy and capacity. It is not clear how this is possible if the government is determining the outcomes. As well, the OEB has commenced a regional planning exercise which was supposed to address trade-offs between resource types (transmission, generation and conservation). It now appears that the government will make all of those trade-offs."

There are too many checks and balances that have been eliminated in this bill. That will give the minister, in my mind, just a little bit too much power when energy policy is developed, without proper agencies overlooking those decisions.

So the question is, "What is the criteria and process by which the government will develop plans and directives?

The criteria that the OEB was supposed to apply to the review of integrated power system plans was by reference to prudence and cost effectiveness as determined in an open hearing. While people may be critical of the planning criteria historically applied by the OPA and the OEB, planning requires trade-offs between a number of factors—such as efficiency, reliability, environmental impact, economic development, etc. The government clearly makes these types of trade-offs in other infrastructure areas—roads, hospitals, etc. Will these criteria now apply to energy; will the government develop new criteria; or will there be no meaningful criteria at all?"

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These are good questions that have been brought by Canadian Energy Perspectives.

"What is the purpose of the new directive powers?

"Transmission planning and development has proven to be challenging. In both Alberta and Ontario there have been concerns raised about the effectiveness of the process for attracting new entry. There could be lessons learned from both jurisdictions. It is not clear how those lessons can be incorporated if the only process that the legislation puts in place is that the government will decide if, when, and how new transmission should be developed. As for storage, it provides a function that a number of existing services and assets can now provide, most at a lower cost. It is not clear why the government should be choosing that particular technology over other, competing approaches.

"As a result, although Bill 135 is clear that authority for every electricity decision will reside with the government, it does not address how the government will exercise that authority. Given the magnitude of the issues involved, one can only hope that the government will develop new governance models to guide the exercise of its apparently unrestricted powers."

This is a cause for concern for members on this side of the House: that there will be too much power left with the energy minister in deciding these types of issues. I want to remind you, Speaker, that years ago the Green Energy Act was implemented and what it did to areas of rural Ontario where I come from, where Perth–Wellington is, where the fight—I guess I can put it "fight"—or the turbulence caused by the wind turbine issue certainly is still evident in rural Ontario—we have people still fighting these wind farms, as they call them. We see the government approving new installations of these wind turbine farms even though we don't really need any more power right now.

We even see them okaying some of these projects around sensitive areas, and there has been some court action because of this. We see the approval especially of one up near Collingwood, which is very problematic or very disturbing in that the approval by the environment minister on this type of project—I'm certain he had consultations with the energy minister too—could have some very serious conflicts with airports in that area. The municipality has no power to stop that because their planning rights were taken away from them with the implementation of the Green Energy Act.

It's interesting that these projects right now, Speaker—even though there are so many of these turbines in operation right now in Ontario, they still only supply about 4% of the power, so they have been as effective as this government had wished.

Also, it means that the government can make crucial decisions regarding the expansion of natural gas without ever consulting companies such as Union Gas or Enbridge. In addition, even if the government does consult these groups, they are under no obligation to act on their advice. This is not taking good advice from people who are in the business, and this is something that I think any legislator should do. If they are going to propose this type of legislation, why not act on the advice of the people who are in the business? I'm not going to ask you, Speaker, to go out and milk my cow, because you probably don't know how to do it.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I do.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, you may over there. But what I'm saying is that you have to take advice from people who know what they are doing.

They are only required to consider the results of such consultation. We see that there are quite a few holes in this legislation that probably could be tightened up with the proper amendments—if the government does accept any of our amendments. I would certainly hope that the energy minister does consider that if this legislation moves forward.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill 135. I listened intently to the member from Perth–Wellington—his last nine minutes. He mentioned something about cows. That got me thinking about Western movies. What this bill reminds me of is the famous Western movie The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

There is a good in this bill.

Interjection: There is?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, there is. The part about measuring efficiency for water: That's a good initiative. There are some problems with it, and that's the bad, because there are a few issues about how that efficiency is measured. In the case of a greenhouse, greenhouse A might use less power than greenhouse B, but greenhouse B might produce a lot more produce. So its efficiency per production unit is higher, but it could be that it's deemed less efficient. That's something where good and bad could be found.

The ugly part of this bill is that—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's everything else.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, yes, basically: everything else. It puts way too much power and onus in the hands of the Minister of Energy. It could be that the government thinks that their ministry and ministers are all-knowing, and that's their opinion, but we've had a lot of experience in this province with good initiatives—like

the Green Energy Act—gone bad because of wanting to push things through so quickly that they didn't look at all the consequences. It took something like green energy, at which everyone should have embraced—but in rural Ontario, in many places, green energy is a very contentious, bad issue. It never should have been like that. If they had actually looked and been more careful about how this act was implemented—and this could turn out to be the very same thing. We don't want that to happen again.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened to the member from Perth–Wellington. I think he made some valid comments. The only thing is that we are now at third reading, and we've been at third reading, I think, for six hours—

Hon. James J. Bradley: We never used to have any third reading.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes. I remember that when I was here in opposition, the Harris government didn't allow third reading debate—zero hours. All I'm saying is, debate is great, but this bill went through the committee process without any amendments. It went through second reading, and it went through third reading. We're here, so let's get on and make some fixes that are necessary in our energy system and make our system more cognizant of the need to conserve water. That's one of the main things in this bill. In this province, we are wasting too much water, and this bill will help address that in part. So let's get on with dealing with the issues at hand for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I did appreciate the opportunity to listen to my colleague from Perth–Wellington, a member who has come to Queen's Park to represent his constituents and who has first-hand experience of the damage that has been done in his community with this government's Green Energy Act and how it has pitted a community against its residents when it comes to things like windmills and unwanted energy projects in their backyards.

The member opposite talked about the fact that we have third reading. I think it's ever so important, especially with this government, that we have an opportunity to actually engage in further debate, because we've seen the problems that this government has put forward in terms of their legislation. Look at the committee recently, when the government themselves have tabled numerous and abundant numbers of amendments to their own bill, which makes you believe that they've not done the proper consultation ahead of time. We're thankful for third reading debate to remind the government of some of the errors they've made. You look at the example with this particular bill. There's still no requirement for the minister to hold consultations with Ontarians or with people within the energy sector. The bill only suggests that the minister must consult with groups the minister considers appropriate.

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I'll give you an example of that. If the government can make critical decisions regarding the expansion of natural gas without even consulting, for example, Union Gas or Enbridge—in addition, even if the government does consult these groups, it is under no obligation to act on their advice. They are only legislatively required to consider the results of such consultation.

I think my colleagues' comments today bring light to some of these concerns. We hope the government will listen and that we'll see some of these changes put forward, as we have asked for in other bills and not got.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always honoured to rise in the House and to have a couple of moments to speak about bills that are before us.

As we know, this bill is here on third reading for us to debate. Government members are saying that the Conservatives didn't do third reading and they don't have to do third reading. He also talked about the fact that there were no amendments to this bill made. Quite frankly, Speaker, from my time in this House and especially in the last couple of years, if there were no amendments to this bill, that's probably because the government turned down every amendment that the opposition put forward, because that's the way things happen here in this House.

This bill is concerning with the lack of consultation and the lack of oversight that the minister will have.

I just want to touch quickly and read from the member from Toronto–Danforth's opening debate on this. He said, "I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill, Bill 135, a bill that slams shut the door on public intervention in the development of hydro planning in this province, a bill that one presenter who came to committee described as giving the Minister of Energy the powers of an energy czar—a massive concentration of power in the hands of one person and one cabinet. Because of that, this is a bill that will be condemned for years to come. This isn't one that will simply be lost in the woodwork; this is one that, in the future when there are inquiries into electricity scandals, will be cited. Committees, judges and commissions of inquiry will trace back where damaging, expensive and scandalous decisions started out, and they will have started out with this bill."

We have some serious concerns with this bill, Speaker, so I appreciate the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? Response? I return to the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Eglinton–Lawrence, Kitchener–Conestoga and Hamilton Mountain for their comments.

As was brought out, consultation is in this bill in some aspects but it doesn't have to be listened to, and that's a problem that we have with this bill: that the bill will give

power to just a certain few in the Ministry of Energy, which can be quite dangerous. The minister is not compelled to listen to experts in the field, as has been mentioned. The minister is not compelled to listen, really, to anybody but what the minister wants to do.

I would hope that the minister thinks about that very seriously before making any decisions with this act or to implement this act in a way that may be dangerous to the people of Ontario. I think that's my main concern with the whole thing: that accountability measures are not in this act pertaining to ministerial decisions. As we've seen from past history over the last number of years, that can be a dangerous thing, where we have too few people with too much power, and I certainly have real concerns about this. I do hope that the minister. will listen to that and make decisions based on the best evidence that he can find.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is my pleasure to rise today, as MPP for London West, to participate in third reading debate on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. On behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, I want to express my strong opposition to this deeply flawed legislation.

In November, I had the opportunity to speak to second reading of this bill. So to prepare for this third reading debate that is upon us today, I took the time to carefully review the comprehensive input that was provided on the bill by the 14 organizations that appeared in February before the Standing Committee on General Government. Certainly, those are the organizations whose comments are recorded in Hansard. However, I know that many more organizations and individuals also provided written input to committee members raising concerns about the legislation.

As I read through the Hansard of the committee hearings, I found myself wondering how on earth the government is going to be able to address these very substantive recommendations that were being made by the presenters and try to mitigate some of the concerns that were raised.

You can imagine my surprise when I looked at the third reading version of the bill that is before us today and found that it is exactly the same as the bill that was debated at second reading. Not a single amendment was incorporated into the bill. The legislation was reported back to the Legislature exactly as it had been before those 14 organizations took the time to appear before the committee and before the experts had an opportunity to raise their concerns and highlight some of the major problems with the bill.

Clearly, this bill confirms the experience that we have seen with this lack of listening and the lack of respect that was shown to the expert input that was provided. All of this confirms that the government has learned nothing from the gas plant scandal. They have learned nothing about the pitfalls of allowing political interference to contaminate energy-planning decisions.

Another thing that this bill confirms is the government's total disregard for the office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Basically, with the provisions included in Bill 135, the government has dismissed the in-depth review and audit that was conducted of the electricity planning system process by the Auditor General in 2015.

We know that since 2004, in Ontario, there has been legislation requiring the province to develop an Integrated Power System Plan and then to update the plan every three years. However, the auditor found, in her 2015 review, that the Liberal government had failed to implement an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process in accordance with the legislation. Not a single Integrated Power System Plan—otherwise known as an IPSP—has ever been approved in the province of Ontario.

The auditor said, "Over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down, and Ontario's energy system has not had a technical plan"—in other words, an IPSP—"in place for the last 10 years." She went on to say, "Operating outside the checks and balances of the legislated planning process, the Ministry of Energy has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers."

The auditor revealed that the oversupply of energy resulted in Ontarians paying $32.6 million between 2009 and 2014 to other jurisdictions to take the surplus power that we were generating. This energy surplus was clearly a result of the government's ad hoc approach to planning the electricity system. In the end, what we saw was electricity being sold at fire sale prices to neighbouring jurisdictions while the people we represent, the people I represent in London West, are struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates that show no sign of slowing down.

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This is not the only example of how the system has broken down. Last year, we saw the government refuse to submit its Hydro One privatization scheme to the Ontario Energy Board for review or even to disclose the analyses that were prepared for the Ed Clark privatization panel. We saw the Financial Accountability Officer blocked from access to government documents about the sale by invocations of cabinet secrecy, and all of this in the face of promises by the Premier that her plan to broaden the ownership of Hydro would be transparent, professional and independently validated.

Speaker, lack of transparency seems to be the modus operandi of this government. It's happening with another bill that we were just talking about this morning in this Legislature, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Again, with that bill, the government is blocking the Financial Accountability Officer from gaining access to documents about cap-and-trade and again they are citing cabinet secrecy. But as my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth has asked, how is the Financial Accountability Officer supposed to verify the effectiveness of the government's climate change initiatives without being able to access details of the

initiatives? Again, while we see the government promising that revenues raised through cap-and-trade will be spent transparently and effectively, there are no legislative protections included within that legislation to prevent the government from spending cap-and-trade revenues on basically anything it wants.

Another example of how broken the system is: We just recently learned of yet another OPP investigation into email deletion related to the cancellation of the Windstream deal on offshore wind power. That's currently the subject of a $475-million lawsuit against the government. It's pretty clear that the ad hoc approach that has been in place for the last decade is not working to ensure that public good within the province.

The government had an option. They could do what the 2004 Electricity Restructuring Act mandates them to do, but instead we have seen them move in the other direction. They have basically been ignoring their statutory obligations, making up their own process, making ad hoc decisions outside of any formalized structure. Rather than return to what the legislation requires, we now have before us Bill 135, which enshrines and formalizes the ad hoc process that has gotten us into the mess that we're in over the last decade.

What Bill 135 does is it replaces the process that is in the 2004 legislation with an act that effectively makes the Minister of Energy the energy czar for the province of Ontario. It centralizes control for all energy planning in the office of the minister. It removes statutory requirements for public consultation and input into power planning and it reduces the mandatory oversight role of the Ontario Energy Board to a simple review of the capital costs of implementation. No longer will the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO have planning and approval authority. Instead, both organizations will be relegated to becoming mere implementers of the minister's direction, and this is direction that is being given on the largest single net infrastructure investments that are made by the province of Ontario.

In her 2015 report, the Auditor General, when she was describing this ad hoc planning process, said that "this plan was … not sufficient for addressing Ontario power system's needs and for protecting electricity consumers' interests."

Bill 135 is enshrining for future generations a process that the Auditor General clearly found to be deficient. In their presentation to the committee that received input on Bill 135, the Society of Energy Professionals said that "the effect of Bill 135, as written, is inherently incompatible with complying with system planning best practices and with the recommendation of the Auditor General's report with respect to the system planning process."

They go on to say, "The society believes that the proposed alterations to the planning process would severely hamper the political independence and effectiveness of the electricity system planning process and oversight in a way detrimental to the public good."

Tom Adams, in his presentation to the committee, was even stronger. He said, "Eliminating the last vestiges of independence, making the IESO and OEB extensions of the Ministry of Energy, exacerbate rather than mitigate the deficiencies identified by the Auditor General." He also says, "If this legislation passes as it's written, we'll lose some of the checks and balances that are in place in the existing system." He admits he has "criticisms of the existing system, but losing these checks and balances would be a retrograde step. We need them. We need more sober second thought before we leap into multi-billion-dollar decisions."

There's so much testimony that was provided to the committee, it's hard to know what quotes to share today in my remarks.

Clearly, what we have seen is a government that has no interest in giving the public the ability to analyze and provide input into energy policies, a government that has no interest in having independent, third-party assessments of their energy plans and no interest in getting the kind of analysis they need so that they can decide whether or not to proceed with energy projects.

This is particularly troubling when we consider the costs of these energy infrastructure projects and we consider the public dollars that have been wasted because of the mistakes that were made in the past. We saw $1 billion and more—and counting—wasted on the relocation of the gas plants. We saw $2 billion squandered on the implementation of smart meters.

Not only are these energy system plans costly but they also carry with them major economic and environmental risks. Mark Winfield, in his deputation to the committee, said, "They carry risk of underbuilding or overbuilding infrastructure in a period of high economic uncertainty, and they carry risks of technological lock-in in what may be the most significant period of technological innovation in the electricity sector since the emergence of utility systems a century ago….

"The proposed legislation would mean that system plans and their contents would be subject to no meaningful external review. There would be no review of their economic rationality, cost-effectiveness or prudence through the Ontario Energy Board. There would be no environmental review under the Environmental Assessment Act or any other mechanism. There would be no review in terms of their resilience and ability to adapt to changing economic, social or technological circumstances."

This was from a deputant, Mark Winfield, as I mentioned, who is an associate professor of environmental studies at York University and chair of the Sustainable Energy Initiative, so he is someone who knows about energy policy.

1700

The other big concern with Bill 135 is the changes that it has made to the public consultation process. Several of the deputants who spoke to the committee commented specifically on the risks inherent in changing the way public consultation is received. The Canadian Environmental Law Association, which was speaking on behalf of seven public interest organizations, all of which are opposed to Bill 135, said:

"There's no public consultation on the IESO's technical reports," which means that "the long-term energy plan consultation is narrow. The public will not have access to all the documents that it needs to look at, understand, review and challenge those plans. Section 25.29(5) states that the minister must only publish 'any relevant background materials or other information the minister considers appropriate.'"

It does not require disclosure of all background material and all evidence that the minister is considering in making the energy plans, so basically it gives the minister total discretion to decide what materials it considers appropriate to be released to the public during the consultation on the energy plans.

Another concern that was raised by the Canadian Environmental Law Association is around the lack of consideration for environmental issues in Bill 135. There is no requirement that the long-term energy plan take into account sustainable development or environmental issues. There's no requirement that conservation is the first priority and that it also consider renewable energy, environmental impacts of proposals in the plan and environmental impacts of alternatives.

With Bill 135, all of the protections that have been in place for the last decade, even though they haven't been enforced as they should have been—the legislative protections that had existed are gone. They are lost. Ontarians will no longer have access to that regulatory framework that ensured that the public good was at the centre of energy planning decisions.

The unaccountable, closed process that the government has consistently followed over the last decade, even though it was not in accordance with the legislation, has now become formalized. That is now the new legislative framework within which the government will be operating. No longer will Ontarians have a legislated right to be part of decision-making on energy projects.

The bill is a gift to private interests, who will now find it easier than ever before to lobby the government for approval of costly and risky energy projects without any kind of independent public scrutiny. There will no longer be a public process for citizens to intervene and to challenge the minister about energy planning.

Another concern that was raised by the Society of Energy Professionals was about the lack of a public record of the input that is given to the ministry. The public will not even have access to the documentation and the information that the ministry is using to make the decisions.

The society says, "There's no opportunity to vet that input, so stakeholders could be giving erroneous information to the ministry. There's no opportunity for other stakeholders to challenge the veracity of that information, nor do we know what the ministry does with the information. There's a potential danger that the ministry would use incorrect information from stakeholders when putting together the plan, because there has never been an opportunity to see what the input is or to test its validity."

Speaker, we know what happens when regulatory bodies like the OEB are relegated to the role of implementers when independent scrutiny is taken away. As I mentioned, we just have to look at smart meters, which came with a financial cost of $2 billion. We just saw recently, with another piece of legislation that was discussed in this House, the removal of the OEB from review of the transmission sector, and now we see the OEB being excluded from playing any role in the energy-planning process.

Speaker, Bill 135 is a deeply, deeply flawed bill and it should be strongly opposed by all Ontarians.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I simply want to draw it to the attention of the House, because I recall, when I was first elected to the House, that there was no third reading debate by practice, so there was virtually no third reading debate.

That is because first reading is routine, and we understand that. In second reading, there was a robust debate, as there was on this bill, including, I think, the member for Danforth. In fact, he gave a good speech on second reading.

Then the bill goes to the committee, where there's discussion that takes place in committee and, often, hearings from the public. Amendments are proposed, and then it comes back for third reading.

We have now spent over 16 hours on this particular bill. I think that most people have heard all of the very good speeches on it and the input in committee. I think that most members—at least on this side of the House, and maybe even the member for Sarnia—would think that it's time to have a vote on this bill.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I do know that it seems sometimes tedious to be debating these bills in third reading when a lot of things have been said already. Certainly, this side of the House has never agreed with this bill, and that's quite evident.

But the thing is that this is the way things work around here: We do allow debate. It's an opportunity for members to put their opinions forward in the House. It's an opportunity for us to try to represent our constituents as best we can. Certainly these debates are part of that process.

I do know that we all have raised objections to this bill on this side of the House, and the member from London—

Interjection: West.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: London West, sorry—the member from London West was very eloquent in her speech. To me, it sounded very well-researched, Speaker. She voices a lot of the negative opinions that certainly this party has with this bill.

So I do know that, sometimes, things in this House get tedious, but that is our job: to debate these bills and to speak about them and, at least, let our constituents know

that we are trying to do our work here and that we want to represent them as best we can. I believe debates of this nature do ensure that.

I want to congratulate, again, the member from London West on her very well-prepared comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to follow the member from London West, who set out, I think, all the critical arguments about why this bill is so bad, so destructive is and one that needs to be defeated.

The member for St. Catharines, with all his virtues—I won't list them all; I only have two minutes, and I know that I would run over and, Speaker, you would shut me down. It would be a terrible thing. But he's arguing that there doesn't need to be a third reading on this particular bill or bills in general.

But in fact, we go through a process where a bill is introduced at first reading. In second reading, we get to talk about the main elements. We get to go to committee and we hear the public's input. We get to question the public for their thoughts. Then we go clause-by-clause.

Typically, Speaker, we come back with a bill that reflects the passage of that time and that process. This bill extraordinarily reflects nothing in terms of what the public had to say and nothing in terms of what the opposition or the third party had to say when we got into clause-by-clause. None of the most glaring deficiencies of this bill have been corrected in the course of second reading or committee hearings.

I think I've said before and I think the member has heard me say that the thing that was most stark—it certainly came from the Auditor General's report—was that this is a government that passes laws and then ignores them. It treats them as guidelines, as suggestions. Certainly, when it comes to power planning, it has not followed its own laws for a decade. That has consequences, Speaker. As flawed as the earlier process may have been, at least there was a requirement that the public had the information in advance of making commentary so they could make informed comments.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to propose to the House that now that we have debated Bill 135 for more than 16 hours, it is time to move to the vote on Bill 135. Nothing new is being said in debate.

There is a central principle at stake here, which I just learned about today, which is that honour demands that, to put it in colloquial language, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

I understand that during the Harris years, the Conservative government never allowed third reading. If, when you were in government, third reading was considered not required and dispensed with, I just have to ask the question: Why would you now think that third reading is that important?

That said, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government always allows third reading. We're not following the Conservative path at all, but it does beg the question: How can the same members—and I know some of the members on that side served in the Harris cabinet and in the Harris government—who sat there and did not support third reading now turn around and say, "We want third reading"? There is something wrong with this principle where it's one set of rules when you're in power and quite another set of rules when somebody else is in power.

That said, we respect the democratic process. We always support third reading. But, Mr. Speaker, 16 hours—and I would urge the members on that side to look at Hansard and see if there's anything new that's being added. I think they will agree that nothing new is being added.

So in the interests of Ontarians, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being well served, I urge that we move now to a vote on Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have this afternoon for questions and comments on this round. I return to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the minister without portfolio, the member for Perth–Wellington, my colleague from Toronto–Danforth and the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for their comments.

I do have to take exception with what was said by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care about nothing new being said because, quite frankly, if I had not taken the opportunity to review the Hansard, to read what the deputants who came to the committee had to share, I wouldn't have known how blatantly the government has ignored the expertise, the valuable feedback, that was provided on the legislation. So that, to me, is new.

I don't know if all of the members of this Legislature have taken that time to review the committee transcript, but I am glad that I did because there's this perception that there are 20 caucus members here and however many over there, and that we are being politically obstructionist. Well, almost every single deputant who came to the committee raised the exact same concerns, that what Bill 135 is going to do is formalize a process that concentrates political power in the office of the Minister of Energy. It opens the door to further gas plant scandals, to further white elephant energy boondoggles, which is completely contrary to the best interests of the citizens of this province.

So third reading debate is a very important opportunity to let Ontarians know what this Liberal government is doing and how little this Liberal government thinks about the role of independent officers of the Legislature, like the Auditor General, who advised completely against going in this direction.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 135, the energy statute law. I was going to commend the deputy House leader when he said that—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Paper versions.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I want to look at the versions, because I understand there was a lot of stalling and a lot of filibustering back in that day by the opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Responsible.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We're doing responsible debate. We're not filibustering, we're not stalling, we're not ringing the bell—I think that's a good thing to do; we should probably be looking at that.

But anyway, I've had the opportunity to listen. I've heard the last part of the debate and I really want to commend the member from London West and of course the member from Perth–Wellington.

I've got a few things I'd like to say about this as well. I've read some of the transcripts from the previous debate here in the Legislature as well. That's when the bill went to the Standing Committee on General Government. The one member said, "Well, it went to committee and there were no amendments." Well, as the member from London West rightly pointed out, any time there are amendments put forward, the government votes them down. So that's a pretty poor argument in my estimation. Back home, we wouldn't even bring that up.

I don't dispute that there need to be changes to these acts, particularly the Green Energy Act. I doubt that Bill 135 is going to propose any changes the people in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton want to see. Specifically, there seems to be an attempt by the legislation to centralize all transmission and electricity sector planning within the Minister of Energy's office and in the hands of political staff.

I remember that the former Premier, Premier McGuinty, said, "Hey, we built 20 or 22 gas plants and we got a couple of them wrong." Well, if they got a couple of them wrong, ladies and gentlemen out there, with all kinds of advice, apparently, and all kinds of people having input, how is this going to be any better? How many more are they going to get wrong? How many more wind turbines, how many more installations that are going to be installed around Ontario are going to be wrong? The minister and his so-called expert staff obviously messed up in the past. According to the words of the former Premier himself, he said, "Hey, we built a bunch of these gas plants and we got a couple of them wrong." I think there's probably a lot more they got wrong than just a couple.

Anyway, instead, those recommendations will be replaced with a self-conducted assessment by the Ministry of Energy. This no doubt means there will never again be a critical report of any sitting government's energy plan. Now, we could change that after the next election. There would probably be inquiries and everything that will be held. We'll probably get to the bottom of it at that time. So for the people out there in television land back home in Sarnia–Lambton, you'll have to wait until after the next election. Then we'll get to the bottom of all these scandals.

Political staff and communications staff in the minister's office will reduce all future assessment of our energy system and needs to self-congratulatory talking points. You know, they want to get by this debate—would there be any more debates brought up? Some people say, "Oh, there have been 16 hours of debate so we need to move on." Why? "Oh, because we won the election."

Anyway, I suppose we've seen this sort of behaviour before with the same government. Recently, it was reported by several media sources that seven renewable energy companies that donate more than a quarter of a million dollars to the Ontario Liberal Party received contracts from this government during the last round of renewable procurement. The three companies with no history of donations to the party all ended up empty-handed. As a result, there are serious questions about the conduct of this government in respect to energy contracts. I don't see how that's going to serve the public in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton and across this great province any better, as the members from the third party and our party have already outlined.

Centralizing further planning power in the minister's office would only feed the perception that this government will make decisions on the energy file that first and foremost benefit their own party and less so the greater needs of Ontarians. This is a scary thought for the residents of my riding and, I'm sure, across the province.

Lambton county, in the Sarnia–Lambton riding, is on record as an unwilling host to the sort of industrial wind turbine projects that this government has decided to make a political legacy out of. Some legacy: some industrial wind turbine.

I said the other day in the House and I'm going to repeat it again today that I truly believe that if members from that party, the government party, when the rural parts of Ontario had stood up to the former Premier, to this Premier and to the former energy minister and said, "No, we won't accept those"—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: As Mulroney said to John Turner many years ago, "You had an option, sir…." and you could have done better. They didn't do it and now we're stuck with these monstrosities across this great province. Someday we'll get to the bottom of it.

1720

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Lots of people making money off of it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, there are a lot of people making money off of it, that's right: the contractors.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Glen Murray would have done a better job. He should have been energy minister. He would have done a better job.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. I think the Minister of the Environment would have probably made a better energy minister.

There are some very active groups in Lambton county like the Plympton-Wyoming WAIT, which is We're Against Industrial Turbines, and also one in my home township of Enniskillen called CORE. That's about not signing any leases so they can't bring these industrial wind turbines into Enniskillen township. It has worked pretty good. It's too bad that some of the other parts of the province didn't do something similar because it might have kept these monoliths out of their ridings.

They're prepared to take their fight against the ministry's plans to place wind turbines in the Plympton-Wyoming community all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Unfortunately, you've got to fight your own government with your own volunteer—I was at one of their fundraisers just recently. It cost me a few bucks out of my own pocket, but I didn't mind because I think it's going to a good issue and a good subject. I support them in their efforts and will continue to do everything I can do to help.

There's understandably concern with Bill 135. Moreover, what if there was a minister in place who decided they only want industrial wind turbines to supply energy to the whole province? Where would the reality check come from? The IESO and the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, will have had their mandate and role in Ontario's energy system diminished and neutered. They will simply be reacting to the whims of the minister and his or her staff. It's not that far-fetched of a scenario.

Right now, sitting at the cabinet table for this government, is a minister who has gone on record saying that he would like to see the end of nuclear power generation and the end of natural gas as a source of energy and home heating in Ontario. This would do away with two of the most economical, affordable and reliable sources of energy this province has, to be replaced by what? How would we know that the minister of the day and his or her political staff have done a proper assessment of the impacts of this drastic shift? Would they bother to do a cost-benefit analysis?

We know they didn't do a cost-benefit analysis on the Green Energy Act. The Auditor General said that, and a number of other people who are officers of this House said that. So it wasn't the Tories saying it; it wasn't the NDP. That was officers of this House who said there was no cost-benefit analysis. I don't know how they got to this.

To be honest, I don't know how the backbenchers of the Liberal Party go home on the weekend, see their constituents and hear them talking about their hydro bills and how they can't get proper health care—why? Because there are no dollars left to do it. So I don't know how they go home and do it. I wouldn't want to have to face them.

To be frank, Madam Speaker—I see you've returned to the chair—if we allow for a system where the minister's office has total, unfettered control to be enshrined in legislation, we are just opening the door to costly, costly mistakes. It was this sort of attitude back in 2009 that the then Minister of Energy put on display to push through the industrial wind turbine policy and the Green Energy Act that have now saddled this province and the ratepayers of this province with billions and billions of dollars in contracts.

If Bill 135 leads to that sort of one-sided decision-making process in our energy sector, it will be a disaster for so many people in Ontario. As I said, the former Premier admitted that they had made a number of mistakes.

Again, as I said the other day when this House was debating the need for a public inquiry into public contracts and the energy industry, the energy policies that this government has pushed through have been the ruin of many people in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. At the end of the day, that's why we're all here, all of us, on all three sides of the House: to speak up for our constituents.

I hear from people every day. I was just on the phone a little while ago. People in the office struggling, whether it's to pay energy bills—a father with a daughter; I think it was a daughter, eight years old. My staff are working overtime. We should be getting some more help from the government to pay my staff and pay all the other members' staff who have to work on these programs to bail people out. This guy owed $944 on his electricity bill. They shut his hydro off. It's still cool at night, but no hydro. So my staff are back there working overtime to restore this. It's not their fault, it's not that father's and that eight-year-old child's fault; it's the Minister of Energy who made this energy poverty. We've got it here now in Ontario.

Anyway, the Liberal members go home and they say they don't hear this. I don't believe it. I would like to go visit some of their ridings and sit in their constituency offices sometime. I'm sure I would see a lot of people upset.

They're behind on their electrical bills by hundreds and thousands of dollars. Here it is right here: My office had a call the other day from a father who lives with his son who is eight years old. This man just had his power cut off, as I said before. He owes $944 in arrears. My office is trying to assist the man, but this man and his son were forced to live without the basics of electricity the other night because it has become unaffordable. I don't know if we'll be able to get it turned back on. We will try, but the reality is, how long until he falls behind again?

Nothing in Bill 135 is going to fix that problem. All we're going to have is increasing energy rates and unaffordable energy. I truly wonder sometimes if anyone will be able to undo the damage—and there has been all kinds of damage that this government has brought to the energy system of this province. It's a disgrace. If not, what will happen to the people and businesses in Ontario?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Especially petrochemical.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. The petrochemical industry is a big business in my riding. I deal with them all the time.

This government has proven time and time again that sensible energy policies cannot be developed by the energy minister's office alone, as Bill 135 aims to do. When they've tried, they completely omitted important steps, like for example a cost-benefit analysis.

In my riding, there is something that is known as a utility bank that is run by the Salvation Army and the Inn of the Good Shepherd. I want to commend them for the great work they do. My office works with them on an ongoing basis.

The utility bank came about not long after I was elected, probably a couple of years after I was elected, in 2009 or so. It came about as more and more people started having difficulty making ends meet. Through their fundraising work—these private organizations—and thanks to many generous donations from organizations and business organizations in the Sarnia-Lambton community, there is a fund that people can turn to when they need help to pay their utility bills. I don't know how common these are in the other ridings, but I'd certainly encourage you to talk to groups like the food banks and that to form one.

Unfortunately, electricity has become so expensive for so many people in Ontario that, in my community, the utility bank is overwhelmed and the fund is often out of money within just a few days of the beginning of each month. Because of the amount that people are getting behind, the utility bank is finding it can help fewer people each month because there's more month than there is money. That's an old saying my dad used to have: We had more month than we had money. It's truly a sad state of affairs in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I also want to take just a few minutes to speak about some of the sections of Bill 135—I think I'm going to skip that. We've heard enough of that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I was looking forward to that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, you wanted to hear that? Well, here is the last part: "(b) prescribe circumstances in which the minister may request that a person mentioned in clause (a) undertake verification, in the prescribed manner, of any information required to be reported under a regulation made under clause (a) or under a notice published under subsection (4)"—more lawyer talk—and "(c) require a person mentioned in clause (a) to comply with a request by the"—more blah blah blah.

The average person out there just wants to get on with their life, and they're saddled with these regulations, with this lawyer talk, and it just makes life more complicated for the average Joe and Jane out there in small town Ontario. Maybe this is the kind of stuff they like in Toronto; I don't know. But it's not what we like down in my part of the country.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not in Niagara.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Not in Niagara, either.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Maybe Kitchener.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Kitchener or Waterloo—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What, in fact, is the intent of this section? It reads as though this government is planning to force Ontarians into mandatory home energy audits. Mandatory energy audits is an idea that will not go over well in Sarnia–Lambton, and I dare say a lot of other parts of Ontario, probably even in suburban Toronto here. This won't go over well.

By forcing homeowners and businesses to report the amount of electricity, water and gas they use, the government is setting themselves up to be able to easily tax the use of these resources somewhere down the road in the form of a sin tax. You spent too much on energy; you should be ashamed, you should be taken out and put in the—in the old days, they had the—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Stockades?

Mr. Robert Bailey: The stockades in the town square. That's where we're heading with this. They're going to have this sin tax that they're going to embarrass people with, and they'll shame you with your neighbours: "You use more energy than the lady and the guy down the street, so you should be ashamed of yourself. Here, pay up a little bit. It'll make you feel better. You'll pay this sin tax." Right?

Mr. Tim Hudak: If you use less, you pay more, too.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. If you use less, you pay more too, so I don't know what they'll—yes, that's a good point. I'm glad you brought that up. That wasn't in my notes here.

How does the average man or woman in this province get ahead? I don't know. I tell you, it's a good thing my late father—well, my mother's gone, too. He wouldn't be very happy with this, I'll tell you that. I can't believe we're into this in Ontario now. I grew up in the 1950s, went to a one-room school, and I'll tell you, this kind of stuff is unbelievable. There are people out there watching right now, I know there are seniors and that, and they're wondering how the heck—where does this stuff come from? They wonder where the green energy came from. I remember when it came through, I thought, "Well, okay, that's the worst it's going to get," but it's not. This stuff just keeps up. I could say a lot more, but it's probably not in the book which would be allowed.

1730

A few weeks back, Madam Speaker, I met with the Sarnia-Lambton Real Estate Board in Sarnia about a number of issues, and mandatory home energy audits came up. I certainly value the expertise of the members of the real estate board at home and across Ontario as well, and although they were speaking for the province as a whole, property values and market values are what they deal with every day. They were unanimous in their opinion that mandatory home energy audits are a bad idea. They would not only hurt the values of homes, costing homeowners thousands in equity, but they would also now make home ownership less affordable and burden buyers and sellers with even more costs.

Madam Speaker, there's a common theme that has come up again and again in the comments from this side of the House and with the third party as well, and I know the members of the government are hearing it from their constituents as well, and I hope they will start to do

something about it. That theme is: "Life is harder under the Liberals." Life in Ontario is more expensive under the Liberal government.

I'm not going to support Bill 135—maybe people guessed that before I got to this point, but just to make it clear, I won't be supporting this bill. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate. I know there's a number of members who haven't spoken on Bill 135 yet, from all three parties. I thought maybe the governing party would put somebody up to say something, but they've obviously—I think they want to get home for the weekend. I don't blame them. I want to get home too.

Anyway, it's too important to walk away and not continue the debate here that we've had today. It has been great.

Every time I come into this House, it's a great honour to be here. When you get the opportunity to hear from members from all three sides of the House, you hear a personal story. I always say that private members' business and the end of debate on Thursday afternoon is some of the best part of the week, because I think you hear people's personal stories. I heard different people—I won't go into any of them.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had a good debate last week, and it really made a big impression on me when he talked about his mother coming to Canada. He'll know what I'm talking about there. I thought, where else would you hear that other than here at Queen's Park, in this Legislature? I've heard a hundred stories here since I've been here, and they're very important. It's unfortunate it takes these kinds of bills that come through that we have to debate to be here, but the good part of it is that I've heard a lot of good personal stories from the heart, from all three sides, and so I think it's important that we're here for that.

I said that I won't be supporting this bill. I'm not going to support it at third reading. I don't believe that centralizing planning power for our energy system in one office, the Minister of Energy's—no matter who that minister is or from what party. If we were the government, I wouldn't agree with it either. I don't think that would be right. Maybe if I was the minister, I might think it's okay, but I'd know that it's not the right way to go. That's not the way our system was set up. We need these checks and balances. I couldn't support it for that.

We've already seen too many ideas pushed through by this government on the energy file that have been politically driven, that have ended up costing Ontarians billions—by the Auditor General and others—more in energy costs that will be a drain and a burden on generations to come. Hopefully, a government in the not-too-distant future will be able to reverse a lot of these things and go some small way—it won't happen overnight—to returning Ontario's energy mix, Ontario's economy, back to fair and balanced—like a TV show I watch—get it back to a fair and balanced—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Is that Dragnet or—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Fox News—Bill O'Reilly. Just for the people out there, I recommend it. It's on every night. Bill O'Reilly—fair and balanced.

Whether it's high-priced industrial wind turbine energy rates, ineffective smart meters, gas plants scandals or the sale of Hydro One, the political agenda of the government is making life unaffordable in Ontario.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been a pleasure to be able to stand here today and to take part in this debate. I look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in the House and follow the remarks from the member from Sarnia–Lambton on Bill 135 and several other issues. I would like to agree with him that I actually like Thursday afternoons—maybe not after 5 Thursday afternoon. But Thursday afternoon has some of the best debates in this House because people are, quite frankly, tired and want to go home. But they don't use as many speaking notes. They're more off the cuff. If anyone is at home watching this, they should put it on PVR and go outside.

Thursday afternoon is the time that people, looking at this Legislature, would actually understand what we're talking about, because a lot of other times you look at it and you get—before I was elected, I'd look at it and I'd think that these people have nothing in common with me and there's nothing I can relate to. But on Thursday afternoons, you can relate to these debates.

I have to say to the member from Sarnia–Lambton, it's the first time I've heard the word "stockade" used since I've been elected. So I was listening intently to his speech. He always focuses on his riding, as we all do, and although we are at opposite ends of the province, a lot of the issues that the people in Sarnia–Lambton face are the same issues that people who live in Timiskaming–Cochrane face. Our energy costs are very high. We can all debate why that is and whose fault that is, but the fact is, we have to deal with it because the people themselves, in a lot of cases, aren't able to anymore. I'm going to have 20 minutes to speak on this shortly, and I'll expand on that, but it is an issue that we have to deal with.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments and the humor from the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

I am a little perplexed, though—and I believe the honourable gentleman is a gentleman. As he knows, because we have discussed this, he has a private member's bill which this terrible, downtown Liberal latte-sipping environment minister is supporting, which would be hard to explain, given you keep assigning to me that somehow I am not supportive of nuclear and gas power. I'm not sure how I could be supporting your bill on the record.

The second thing is, I was chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, Mr. Speaker, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just want to clarify to the minister: It's Madam Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Madam Speaker. It's a force of habit we should all break. Thanks.

But I want to say to the member, and I would suggest you might find this interesting, that I was chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy under Prime Minister Martin and Prime Minister Harper, where I wrote extensively with our team on nuclear power, on natural gas and on climate change. I think the party opposite would find that valuable. But I would not, my dear friend from Sarnia–Lambton, misrepresent your views as being anti-natural gas or anti-nuclear, and I would appreciate it if you'd stop doing it.

I'm quite happy to share with you, my friend—I wrote for the Toronto Star. I wrote a lot on carbon pricing and nuclear energy. Opposition research and the Conservatives have parsed through every word of it to find something they could twist into some pretzel to make it sound like I have a position that I don't.

Climate change and energy are important policies. I think some of the work you're doing as a member is good. We obviously disagree on this bill. But if you actually look at my voting record in the House, my friend, you'll find I voted for budgets and bills that have made unprecedented investments in natural gas and unprecedented investments in nuclear.

That being said, there are some interesting things happening right now. Nova Corp. just won our minister's environment award, which I just presented to them at lunch today.

This is an area that we have to be very sensitive about in Sarnia, and I look forward to working with you because this industry is so critical to the future of your community.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I enjoyed the member from Sarnia–Lambton's comments. As you saw, I paid rapt attention, particularly when he talked about the petrochemical valley in Sarnia. I'm proud to say that there are roots there from both sides of the family. Shortly after my parents—my dad's family came here from Czechoslovakia. They settled down in Sarnia. My mom's from Petrolia and the pride they had—

Mr. Robert Bailey: A hard oil town.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Exactly, a hard oil town—the $10 bill featured the petrochemical valley of Sarnia for some time before it was replaced by a bird.

There's no doubt that the impact of high hydro prices has had a decimating effect on manufacturing employment in the Sarnia area, and my own in Niagara and Hamilton.

I'll give you one example, Madam Speaker. Stanpac in my riding makes high-quality food packaging. It's increasingly important when we're concerned about tampering and keeping products fresh. They're really good at it. It's a great business that, over the years, has grown. Steve Witt, an entrepreneur, and his son help to run it—a great team.

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They were so successful, they were able to acquire a similar plant down in Texas. Because their business is growing across North America—that's good news. Here's the catch, though: When they look at their hydro bill on a per-kilowatt hour basis in Smithville, near where I live, compared to Texas, it is 100% more expensive in Ontario. To them, that equates to $650,000 per annum. Imagine how many more people you could put on payroll.

Looking at the next expansion—a new product, a new assembly line, hiring more women and men in good manufacturing jobs—it's going to be awfully tempting to put those jobs in Texas. They love Smithville; that's where they're from. They would do everything in their power to keep jobs in Ontario. But sooner or later, as they say, the rubber hits the road. If the hydro bills are double on good jobs and they increase, as the member from Sarnia–Lambton said, I'm worried that the last person out is going to have to shut off the lights.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm once again privileged to be able to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 135 in third reading. Again, I will state my uncomfortableness with this bill as it is. I'm concerned that the government took no amendments from the opposition on this bill, and now we have the exact same bill in front of us in third reading as we did in second, when we had many people come before the committee who had serious problems with the bill as it is.

The hydro prices in this province—we should be doing something to take the politics out of our energy file, and yet this bill formalizes it that much stronger, allowing the minister to make all the rules. Quite frankly, that's a problem, as we've seen in the past when it came to fundraising. The Minister of Energy was one of the ministers who was charged with having a quota within his file. So it's concerning that we're putting him formally in charge of our energy file, something that people in this province count on to keep the lights on, to keep the fridge cold—we count on hydro for everything in this province.

We have a hydro system that is being sold off to the private sector, so it's concerning that we are putting all of the eggs into the minister's basket and are just supposed to trust him with our energy file when, quite frankly, the Liberals have made an awful mess of our energy system. The people of Ontario are definitely paying the price for it, and I think it's incumbent on us to make sure that we do have third reading and we do stand up for the people in our ridings.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Sarnia–Lambton to wrap it up.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I thought there was one more two-minute hit, but whatever.

Anyway, I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, of course the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the member from Hamilton Mountain for their kind and judicious comments.

I do applaud the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change because I know he does support my bill; he has said so on a couple of occasions. It was Bill 176. It was about converting heavy truck fleets to liquid natural gas, which would obviously come from our abundant supply of natural gas in the Marcellus shale.

I'd like to work with him on that—I really would—because it would definitely reduce greenhouse gases and make the environment cleaner. It's cheaper for industry, which I want to support. It would be cheaper for consumers, because I've heard from the big companies like Loblaws and the bigger ones around the province who want to see their shippers using LNG, liquid natural gas, to bring their product to them. It is such a competitive industry; they could keep their prices down. It would be good for the environment and it would be good for the industry.

I think there was $233 million set aside. Let's get that money rolling. Whatever we do with this bill, let's get that money rolling and make it available to industry. The technology is out there. I met with them in committee. It was unanimous. No one did not support that bill in committee. I know that's not what we're here to talk about, but it would really go a long way to cleaning up the environment, and it would be better for everybody. Cars aren't creating the pollution; it's these big trucks that are out there. They're only 3% of the traffic on the road, but I think they contribute almost 30% to that environment.

So I'd like to work with the minister on that, too. We can have our back-and-forth on issues, but at the end of the day, I'm a pretty affable guy and I can work with anybody. I'm sure that he and I could agree.

I appreciate the honour to Nova back in my riding today, and I know that comes from your office. I know that they're very happy to get that.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House and, today, to speak on Bill 135 on behalf of my caucus colleagues and on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. I'm not sure how interested the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane are in this bill, but they should be.

That's part of the problem with the way our system works and the way a lot of political systems work. A lot of things that people should be interested in—they're busy with their everyday lives, so they send us to debate on their behalf and, hopefully, represent them accurately. I've always tried to do that and I will continue to try to do that.

Before I get into the actual meat of the bill, there are a couple of things that I've heard today in this debate that I would like to comment on. First, there have been several comments from the government side that we've debated this enough and it's time to move on and we used to never even have third reading debate under the Tories. Well, there's a saying, and I'm sure not just in farming, "It's better to measure twice and cut once." As long as we're talking about things that are relevant to the issue and as long as someone is learning something—and I've learned quite a few things this afternoon—the debate is relevant.

One of the reasons why third reading debate is prolonged, as I have been told, because I haven't been here that long and we've always had third reading debate when I was here, is that the process in second reading was much more—

Hon. David Zimmer: Collegial.

Mr. John Vanthof: "Collegial" was the word that came from the other side. But the committee was expected to actually help make the legislation better, and it's still supposed to do that. We haven't seen committees travel, not just on this bill, but on many bills, and we haven't seen a lot of things.

It would make a difference. I know a lot more about the GTA than I did when I was elected, because I live in the GTA for six months a year. I appreciate much more the problems that the GTA faces. In the GTA, transit is a huge issue. Before I got elected, many of my constituents thought, "Well, they've got all this stuff. What are they complaining about?" I appreciate that now because I see it. I see when people have to take two or three hours to get to work. I see that's a huge issue.

But on the flip side, because committees don't travel or rarely travel, you don't see people from here, who are the majority of the representatives—certainly, on the government, not all, but the majority are from the GTHA. They might not understand the issues that we face. I would like to commend the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. She was recently in our riding, and I'm sure that she gained a different perspective on what we face. We don't face traffic jams, but we have no public transportation.

The people I represent perceive things differently, so that is very important. That's one of the reasons why we perceive that this government, many times, doesn't take the views of the whole province into account because, quite frankly, you don't travel committees and you don't accept very many, if any, amendments to bills.

You have the mandate to govern. You won the election. We're not complaining about that, but you also have the responsibility to govern responsibly. That means that occasionally a good idea comes from the other side on every bill. So the idea that a bill can be drafted and that not one amendment from the opposition has any validity and is shot down—I don't even know what that word is.

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Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Summarily.

Mr. John Vanthof: —summarily, good; thank you—is ridiculous. If you really think it through, it's ridiculous. That's why third reading debates take a long time, because we have to take every opportunity that we can to try to make the position of the rest of the province—of the people for whom everything is not going so well—to make it heard.

If you want less third reading debate in the long term, actually treat the process with more respect, and it will actually work better.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Define "adequate debate." What is it?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: An adequate process is actually taking the other parties' amendments seriously and not just chop, chop, chop. Or when the other parties say, "Look, this bill, or another bill, should be travelled, because it has a huge impact on other areas of the province," to actually take that seriously and not say, "Ah, well." That's not happening now, and that's why you're getting prolonged debates. That's why. It's not us. It's the way the government is governing, or trying to govern.

The next issue is—and I'm not sure how to handle this one yet, and I talked about it in my two minutes—this bill is the good, the bad and the ugly, right? The Western theme. The good is that they're actually looking at water conservation. I'm not opposed to that. The bad is, we don't know how they're going to do that and how it's going to impact other industries. But the ugly is where they're giving total power to the Minister of Energy to control the energy system.

Now, if the energy system had been running fantastically for everybody in the province, maybe you could say, "Well, these guys are just stalling for nothing." But when you look at smart meters and moving the gas plants—smart meters cost a couple of billion. Moving the gas plants cost a billion. Cancelling offshore wind turbines—who knows how much that's going to cost? The plan hasn't been working very well so far. And each one of those decisions has been a political decision.

Hon. David Zimmer: A what?

Mr. John Vanthof: A political decision. Moving the gas plants was a political decision. Cancelling the offshore wind turbines was a political decision. So again, it was a political decision.

What this act does is put even more pressure on the minister to be forced to make political decisions, and that might not be good for the people of the province of Ontario. That's the issue.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Obviously, I am honoured to be heckled by the ministers from the other side—honoured—because that's a sign: If you're not being heckled, no one is listening. Obviously, at five to 6 on Thursday afternoon, there's actually enough energy left in the ministerial benches to heckle the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I wouldn't say that. No, I wouldn't say that.

Interjection: No accountability without responsibility.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's the biggest issue that this act—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Madam Speaker, a point of order: Could you please bring my colleagues—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—okay. All right.

Back to the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to put it on the record that the Minister of Climate Change is just doing that to make me lose my spot in my notes, which I have done.

The danger with this bill—and we are opposed. We are opposed because this bill—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a bad bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a very bad bill. Even if we believed that the government had very good intentions, the pressure on the Minister of Energy to make decisions that are politically based instead of based on science and truth, and what the province really needs, will be that much greater.

There has been a lot of debate here about the price of energy, the price of hydro. Some members will say, "Well, it's most expensive in Ontario." We'll hear from the government: "No, no, we've got one of the cheapest—specifically in northern Ontario, the commercial energy rate, and blah blah." Well, I've got a different measurement. In my riding, there are businesses—high-energy users—for whom it's cheaper to burn diesel generators than buy from the grid. That is the best measurement that there's something wrong with the energy system. If you can burn diesel and still be cheaper than you can buy power—and these are commercial operators who need a lot of power—that tells you that there's something skewed in the energy system. I don't know how else to explain it.

When the price of diesel goes up a little bit more because of the carbon plan, who knows? That might change. But right now, it's cheaper to burn diesel for hydro in northern Ontario for a commercial business. That's wrong. How our energy system came to that is, quite frankly, beyond belief for many people in Ontario.

We look at other things about how the energy system is working. We've had solar farms built in our area with FIT contracts. For some reason, the contractors didn't get paid because of the milestones in the contract, and everybody washes their hands. The Minister of Energy is not responsible. OPA is not responsible. The company is not responsible. But I have contractors who lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why? Because they didn't take the time to actually think the process through. Again, that's one of the reasons why we should take as much time as we need to make sure these things work.

When we see what has happened with our solar farms, with people burning diesel to create power—I've got other people who can't afford their hydro. They've cut the cord. They use little Honda generators for so many hours a day, and the rest of the day, they just don't use power. These are things that tell you that there's something wrong with the system. When we see that and then we see that one of the answers is to give the minister even more power, there's something in that equation that doesn't fit. That's the problem.

We can talk about facts and figures and argue about what's cheapest and what's not cheapest, but I have

people cutting the cord, and not because they want to cut the cord. Hydro is, in my opinion, pretty well a necessity in our modern society, but there are people in the country who are cutting the cord because they can't afford that necessity in the province of Ontario. You can't tell me that that's the right thing. You can't tell me that giving the Minister of Energy even more power to disregard the people of many parts of rural Ontario is a good thing. You can't.

I hope 6 o'clock is coming soon, because I'm running on fumes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: So you're admitting that you have nothing more to say.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, no. I've got lots of things to talk about, but my things don't come in 30 seconds. My things come in a longer thought process.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So maybe the problem is that the minister didn't have enough authority.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. In response to the Minister of Climate Change—who shouldn't be heckling me, by the way—it's not a case of the minister having not enough authority; it's a case of bad planning and not taking the whole province into account. What we're really afraid of in northern Ontario is that, once again, with this, the minister won't take the whole province of Ontario into account.

I'll be happy to finish my speech at a later date, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 6 o'clock, I will be adjourning the House until Monday, May 16 at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Laurie Scott
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Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
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Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
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Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
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Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
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