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Second Session, 41st Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 September 2016

Jeudi 22 septembre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 September 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 septembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO REBATE FOR ELECTRICITY
CONSUMERS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA REMISE
DE L'ONTARIO POUR

LES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 21, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this bill. There are a lot of different ways to approach it. I would say that what is most critical is: first, understanding the context within which this bill has been brought forward, the context of the electricity system that we're dealing with and the costs that have been imposed on the people of Ontario; and then, finally, what there is in this bill that is of consequence and what there is in this bill that's simply a recycling of previous legislation.

I think, Speaker, in debating this bill we have to first look at: Why are we debating this bill? Why is it before us today? I had an opportunity when the minister first introduced the bill to make a few comments. I think that the information I provided then was useful then and will be useful to note again now. We're debating a potential rebate on people's hydro bills today because there was a Liberal loss in Scarborough, in an election last month. Mr. Raymond Cho is here this morning, elected in Scarborough–Rouge River to the surprise, chagrin and horror of the Liberals. They felt that they owned this riding. They felt that it was their birthright. They felt that it really didn't matter what they did, who they put forward, that it would be theirs. But as you are well aware, that isn't the way that election turned out.

In that election, I had an opportunity, as I'm sure you did, Speaker, to go door to door in that community and talk to what I thought were a pretty decent bunch of people. And the cost of electricity was very much top of

mind; it was very much something that had seized their attention. And even though in Ontario we have increasingly faced, as the years have gone by, people dealing with difficulty with high and growing hydro bills, that wasn't a pain that this Liberal government felt. It wasn't a vulnerability that they felt as consumers feel when they're dealing with their bills. They only felt that vulnerability, they only thought that there was a crisis and a problem, when they lost a seat that they thought was theirs, that they thought they owned. Finally, it has come home that, "Hey, we could lose an election on this issue." And so we are dealing with this bill today.

I'll just note, Speaker, that it was interesting to me, I think it was the day after the bill was introduced, that Liberal staffers at subway stops throughout the downtown, possibly at bus stops in Scarborough and Etobicoke and North York, perhaps at transportation hubs elsewhere in Ontario, were out giving out flyers talking about this 8% reduction.

I should note as well, Speaker, that the Premier has put out an online petition allowing people to register their interest and their concern for a reduction in their hydro bills. It's quite extraordinary to me to see a governing party have a petition in place to petition themselves to do something that they're about to do with a bill they've brought forward. I can only think that it was an email-harvesting opportunity and they didn't want to miss it.

But that is why we are debating this bill. I cast back to 2010, when the gas plant in Oakville was cancelled; again, roughly a year and a half, two years before a writ was to be dropped and an election commence. There was concern about the loss of a number of seats. Frankly, something had to be done. Something was done: The plant was cancelled to protect those seats.

In the case of Scarborough–Rouge River, the government has had a wake-up call about the unpopularity of their approach to electricity, their callous disregard of the population of Ontario and, ultimately, the callous indifference with which the people of Ontario will feel about the governing Liberal Party.

So the function of this bill is a political function. This bill is about salvaging, protecting the Liberal Party. It has little to do with their concern for the people of this province, something that manifestly is not there, and it does not deal with the fundamental problems in the electricity system that I will touch on as I go through my leadoff speech this morning.

Speaker, as you're well aware, the NDP opposed putting the HST on electricity when the HST was first introduced. We see it as a necessity. We see the imposition of a tax on that necessity as unfair and we have

called, in fact, for the repeal of the provincial portion of the HST on people's hydro bills. So we don't think it's a bad thing to give people a rebate, but we do think that people need to understand why this bill is before us today and what the fundamental issues are that are not being addressed by this bill.

If you want to characterize the Liberal approach to the hydro issue, there are a few elements here. There's denial—and I'll enlarge on that—there's cynicism—and I have a lot of material on that—and there's privatization, making friends, colleagues, associates, banks very wealthy. Those things are fundamental to Liberal hydro policy in this province.

Let's look at denial, first off. The new Minister of Energy has denied that there was a problem, wouldn't use the word "crisis" when he was asked about rural energy prices or electricity prices. He had an opportunity in an interview recently to talk about a report from the Financial Accountability Office. He had an opportunity when he was speaking in the House yesterday to talk about electricity prices. It's intriguing to me that the minister would take the words of the Financial Accountability Officer—and I guess this shouldn't be intriguing, this should be considered normal—and reshape them to promote the Liberal narrative on electricity. What did the minister have to say? Let me just take a look.

Mr. Wayne Gates: He doesn't know; he's playing video games.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I'm not that worried about what the minister's doing now. He has much time on his hands.

The minister was talking about the Financial Accountability Officer and saying that families in Ontario spend less money on electricity, on average, than every province except British Columbia. Now, that may well be true, but I would say that there's a commonality between southern Ontario and the lower mainland of British Columbia, and that's that across Canada they may have the mildest climate. It's not a surprise that people who rely on electricity through cold, dark winter months are going to use less in southern Ontario and the lower mainland than they will in Manitoba or Alberta or Saskatchewan or Quebec, all jurisdictions that are substantially colder, jurisdictions that in many ways use a lot of electricity for heating.

0910

The minister went on to say that the total home energy cost is in the middle of the pack when compared to other Canadian provinces, which is also interesting because it doesn't bear on electricity. It bears on the fact that we are close to American sources of fracked gas—fracked in a way that I think is environmentally irresponsible, not sustainable economically or environmentally, ultimately not sustainable socially. But it has meant very low prices. To claim any credit for a lack of forethought on the part of American producers is completely irrelevant to the debate that we're having here. Cheap fracked gas is not the issue that people are dealing with. What they're

dealing with is very high electricity prices. That is a substantial matter.

I note, Speaker, that Ontario now has the highest average electricity rates in Canada, with the possible exception of PEI. I think we're a contender with them from time to time. Manitoba Hydro has a table that one can access on the Web—prices current as of May 2016—and it shows Ottawa, Ontario, as the highest residential bill charge compared to a variety of cities—Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Moncton, Montreal, Regina, Saskatoon, Saint John, St. John's, Vancouver, Winnipeg—\$127.61 a month as opposed to the lowest, which is around \$55.02 in Quebec. So the reality is that we have extraordinarily high electricity rates.

The United States energy information agency has a chart of electricity rates by state that provides up-to-date state averages that can be compared with Ontario's average rates. When you take account of the currency differences, the energy information agency chart shows that Ontario's average rates are higher than any other region in the continental US except for the region of New England. But that's just the average rates. Ontario's rural rates are much higher. Hydro One's low-density rates on a 750-kilowatt-hour bill are bigger than Connecticut's, which has the highest average rates among the 48 states in the continental US, and are tied with Alaska's and second in Canada/US only to Hawaii. So we have very high rates compared to other jurisdictions in North America, and that's what's at issue here today.

Speaker, I had an opportunity to ask the Minister of Energy a question the other day about energy rates. I noted that there's a particular burden on rural and northern Ontario. Francesca Dobbyn, executive director of the United Way of Bruce Grey, recently declared rural energy poverty to be a crisis. "People are angry, they're frustrated and they don't know what to do," Dobbyn told the CBC. "They're being told it's their fault ... you left a light on." Dobbyn has met people who have had to walk away from their houses because the hydro bill is bigger than the mortgage. She says the largest hydro bill the United Way has worked on was \$22,000. It's a big bill; it's a very big bill.

Losing power in rural areas can mean losing drinking water. In July, the Toronto Star reported on a 74-year-old pensioner who got her hydro cut off by Hydro One at the very moment she received new energy-efficient appliances paid for through Hydro One's home assistance program. Not only did the pensioner lose her lights, she lost power to her well pump, which meant she also had no drinking water and, frankly, no water for a toilet or a shower. That is how energy poverty can turn into a public health crisis.

Despite this, in July Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault refused to use the word "crisis" to describe rural energy poverty. He also said he had no idea how many people are behind on their hydro bills and didn't know if the province even collects such data. Speaker, for your information, for the information of the House, for the information of anyone who may be watching on

television at the moment, Ontario does collect such data. About 567,000 households were behind on their bills as of December 31, 2015. That's up by 94,000 households from 2013. A lot of people are having difficulty with their hydro bills, and they're having difficulty for a variety of reasons, but centrally because Ontario has pursued a course of action that has made electricity very, very expensive.

The Premier and the former Minister of Energy have said in this House that we make a profit on hydro sales here in Ontario. In fact, I raised this issue in the House with the former Minister of Energy, and I was thrown out for my remarks, which were termed unparliamentary. I have to say to you, Speaker, that it is very difficult for me to talk about this file without using unparliamentary language. I restrain myself. I'll let your imagination run riot as to what unparliamentary words I might use in talking about the Liberals in this matter.

The reality is that we sell close to \$2 billion worth of power to Quebec, Michigan, New York and others, and we get \$500 million on it. Speaker, when you sell something worth \$2 billion and you get \$500 million, you're not making a profit. You may be cutting your losses. You may regain 25 cents on the dollar. But you're losing; you are not profiting. For this government, for this Premier, to have maintained that we're making a profit when we're losing money is extraordinary. I can't use the words that I think would accurately describe it. I know, Speaker, that you would call me to account. You might even tell me I was using unparliamentary language if I spoke what I truthfully believe are the actual words about the minister and the Premier.

Speaker, we do have a crisis. I know I noted the words of the head of the United Way of Bruce Grey. But I have to say that twice in the last month, when I've been going door to door in my riding, I came across people having tremendous difficulties with their hydro bills. I came across a senior who had gotten her bill for a thousand dollars—a thousand dollars. She was just totally perplexed. What does she do with a thousand-dollar bill for electricity? What can she do? Where is that money going to come from? She's completely, totally at a loss. Speaker, my guess is that in your riding there are people who are dealing with similar bills, who have similar anxieties, and may well have contacted your office about it.

I came across another senior who is on oxygen. She said to me, "I need to use this oxygen all day long. I can't get overheated, so I have to have air conditioning on. Because the oxygen dries you out, I have to have a humidifier going." Her last bill was \$700. She said, "I'm disabled. I'm on a pension. I don't know how to deal with this bill. Is there any way that I can get a substantial cut in this bill?" I told her about the Ontario Electricity Support Program, but frankly, at \$700 for a bill, she needed a lot more than \$30 a month or \$75 a month.

That is an ongoing and common problem: people having difficulty dealing with these bills, and this government denying it on an ongoing and regular basis—denial first, denial second, denial third, denial at every

point as to what's going on, until Mr. Raymond Cho from Scarborough–Rouge River wins a by-election; then, suddenly, denial is a problem. Suddenly denial is a problem.

I want to look at the cynicism in the approach that the Liberals take to the electricity file. I've had an opportunity to make brief comment on this previously, but I've watched this over the last 10 years that I've been here. When the Liberals are challenged on high and soaring hydro rates, they say, "We needed to get rid of coal. We need to have clean energy. We need to have green energy." Speaker, we did need to get rid of coal, and we do need to have green energy. But that isn't the heart of the hydro price crisis that we have in Ontario; far from it—far from it.

0920

As I've said this before in this chamber, David Herle, who does polling for the Liberal Party—bright guy, clearly astute, understands how the population works—did a presentation, I believe it was to the Canadian Nuclear Association, recently about his polling. He was pretty straightforward. He said, "If you tell people that you're raising prices to do something they want to have done, and they want clean air and they want society to take on climate change, if you say prices are rising because we're dealing with coal and we're dealing with clean air and we're setting things up for climate change, then you have a defensible position."

So whenever there are attacks, when the Conservatives on this side of the aisle say, "You know what? The problem is green energy," the Liberals on the other side say, "You're right. You're right, it is green energy." So green energy gets caught in the jaws of those two proponents and chewed up, because on this side it's a great attack line, on that side it's a great defence line, but in the end it's green energy that suffers, climate action that suffers, while both pursue their actions.

The Liberals don't have to validate what the Conservatives are saying. They run the system. They could actually look at the numbers. They could speak to it, but no, they're using the lines that were developed for them by a very astute and very capable pollster who told them, "This is your best defence." Thus, the attacks on green energy by the Conservatives are validated by the Liberals, to the disadvantage of this province as a whole.

Cynicism showed up in the cancellation of gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville. I had an opportunity in 2008, when the Oakville plant was proposed, to point out to the Liberals that electricity demand was dropping, the plant was unneeded and they shouldn't be proceeding with it. Nope; didn't matter—didn't matter. Exactly what all the machinations were in the back rooms, I don't know. Who it was that they were trying to mollify and make happy, I don't know. But instead of blocking it in the first place, which they should have done, saying, "We have dropping demand; this plant will increase the cost of electricity; the bad location. We don't need it. We won't proceed," no, they proceeded, they took on a political risk, and when that political risk blew up in the then

Premier's face they decided, "Boy, this is not worth it. We could lose a few seats here. We're going to cancel this." But not only did they not cancel it, not only did they say they were going to cancel it and then, recognizing yet another risk, build it somewhere else—so we had a plant that wasn't needed in the first place, we spent a billion to relocate it and it's now producing power we don't need. Similar events happened in Mississauga.

Those cynical moves were astounding on their own, but I want to look at what I call the slushifying of the cap-and-trade funds. For those who are given the responsibility of taking down our words, you've heard Shopify; you've heard Spotify. If you're slushifying something, you're taking money that should be used for a purpose that's critical and using it for a political purpose that serves your ends. We're raising cap-and-trade funds to deal with climate change.

You should know, Speaker, that the current climate action on the part of the government is inadequate to deal with the climate crisis, will not bring about the reductions that are needed. That's all the existing policies. The ones that are coming forward in the climate action plan are still inadequate. You need a very sharp reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to actually meet the commitment that Canada made in Paris in December, commitments that are going to be ratified, apparently, within the next few months. The Liberal approach with their climate action plan in Ontario won't even meet the commitment that Ontario signed onto with subnational governments—the Under 2 memorandum of understanding, the Under 2 MOU—won't meet that, very consciously.

This government knows that it won't meet those commitments, and yet it is going to be using the funds to reduce the costs of electricity to industrial and commercial electricity consumers. I don't see anything wrong with addressing their needs; let's talk about how that's to be done. But taking funds that are desperately needed for a program that the government says is critical to our future and using them for a very short-run political objective of dealing with rising hydro prices is directly contrary to everything that the Premier and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change had to say when we were debating climate change and their climate bill.

Frankly, Speaker, I had an opportunity to get briefed the other day by ministry staff, and it was intriguing to me, in talking about how the money was going to be used, that not only was it going to be used to deal with rates, but they talked about using that money to help with the nuclear fleet here in Ontario. What does that have to do with cap-and-trade? The money is supposed to be raised to put new measures in place to actually drive down our emissions so that we can protect ourselves, but in reality that money, in turn, is going to be used as a slush fund to deal with the political problem the Liberals have today. Speaker, I do find it quite extraordinary—quite extraordinary.

I note that the Minister of Energy, in his remarks yesterday, talked about the commitment of this govern-

ment to produce power that was safe, clean and reliable. I had an opportunity to note this before, but I will just note it again: You're talking about reliable power? I had an opportunity in December 2013 to climb eight storeys in an apartment building in my riding where the power had gone out. There were people who were stranded in apartment buildings in a variety of places in Toronto, seniors on top floors who couldn't negotiate eight, 10, 20 or 30 storeys. They were out of luck.

This government has known since it was elected, and society has known since the late 1990s, that ice storms were a threat to the reliability of power, and yet that wasn't addressed. That wasn't an example of reliability.

A number of months before that, in the summer, we'd had a significant rainstorm event here in the GTA. The western part of the GTA had big power interruptions because a transformer station was flooded out—again, something that we have to expect, which this government should have expected but didn't plan for. I talked to the people at CityPlace who saw their power go out four times, five times in two weeks. Speaker, this government talks about reliability but doesn't deliver it. If you ever get the opportunity, if you're on Twitter, put in the hashtag #darkTO for power outages in Toronto. It tells you about the reliability of the system. In a lot of places, it's not reliable at all.

This government talks about clean power, but it currently has a proposal out there that you can sign up to, to get payment for electricity generated by burning garbage. Now, first of all, burning garbage is completely contrary to the goals of the climate action plan. The more stuff you burn, the more carbon dioxide in to the air and the more climate change. But if you're talking about clean power to subsidize garbage-burning incinerators in this province, and the Independent Electricity System Operator is developing a procurement initiative in support of "new-build municipal energy from waste"—that's the general word for garbage-burning projects—to say that you're in favour of clean power and that at the same time you'll subsidize municipalities to burn garbage is completely wrong and completely contrary to any suggestion that you're going to build a clean system.

Beyond that, a few decades ago Ontario signed contracts with what are called non-utility generators: small in-place generators burning gas to make electricity. Seventy-five per cent of those contracts will be expired by 2018—1,200 megawatts. It's a lot of power. It's a lot of gas.

0930

We're in a situation right now where we have a surplus of power. It's my understanding—and I look forward to clarification and tabling of documents by the Minister of Energy—that those contracts are being resigned. In fact, there's an opportunity to make the system cleaner, and to my knowledge, the government is not taking advantage of that.

I think that saying you're committed to a clean system, when you support burning garbage, and continue to burn natural gas, with contracts that have expired and could be

cancelled, is not an honest approach to the problems we face with the electricity system.

Speaker, why are rates rising? I've talked about the cynicism of the Liberal government on this. I've talked about their denial. Let's talk about, concretely, why rates are rising.

If you want to actually deal with rising rates, soaring rates, you need to understand what's driving the dynamic in the first place. I'll start with privatization, and that means we have to start with Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, who really set things in motion. There was a great series of headlines: Dalton McGuinty, running in 2003, talking about his commitment to public power, how he was going to stop this initiative, how he understood the threat of privatization. But the reality is that once the Liberals were elected, they made sure that all new power generation in Ontario was going to be privately owned—great election rhetoric; very grim power reality.

One of the things that the Liberals inherited from the Conservatives was the privatization of the Bruce nuclear complex. That was leased to British Energy around 2000—British Energy, which subsequently went bankrupt in the UK because nuclear power was uneconomic and had to be profoundly subsidized by the British government to keep 25% of their power going. The leasing of that Bruce complex allowed the owners of Bruce nuclear to generate about a half-billion dollars a year in profit. Take a look at the annual reports.

Prior to that leasing, that half-billion dollars, which is worth about 2.5% on hydro bills—one plant—is now part of the money that we have to pay for hydro, something we didn't have to pay in the past.

I've had an opportunity to talk to people who are part of that ownership group of Bruce nuclear, and they refer to it as the "money fountain," and I think that's an accurate description. We think of it as a place that generates power, but they see it, perhaps more accurately, as a money fountain.

As the Liberal plan of privatizing the system piece by piece—rather than wholesale—rolled out, we added more and more profit to our hydro bills. So I think it's very difficult to find out exactly how much profit there is in the system now. My best estimate is somewhere between \$750 million and \$1 billion a year. It's a lot of money for a system that costs \$20 billion overall. It's substantial. But those decisions are part of what's driving up hydro rates, that privatization directly.

But the other part of it is that with the privatization of generation, your ability to correct a mistake is dramatically reduced. We found that out with the gas plants. When the government tried to shut them down, they realized, "My goodness, we're on the hook for 20 years of profits. We could lose big time in court." So our ability to deal with too much generation means that we can't act, or we find great difficulty in acting, when those are private plants.

It was interesting to me that there was a decision a number of years ago not to proceed with the building of new nuclear power plants at Darlington. OPG, Ontario

Power Generation, was simply told, "You're not proceeding with that." They didn't get any compensation for that. It was just simply a decision. Gas plants: "You're not proceeding with that." Suddenly, we're deep into huge legal risk and potential huge expense.

That tradition of privatization started by Mike Harris, carried on by Dalton McGuinty, set the stage for the current Liberal Premier, who may be the greatest privatizer of all. I noticed today that John Tory is taking a page from her book, talking about selling off Toronto Hydro. I'll say to John Tory and members of city council, having gone door to door in my riding on this issue, this is very unpopular. This will not sell well. People understand that this is bad news for them; they understand that. The sell-off sets the stage for higher rates.

I want to talk to you about one little item that came up, that this government engaged in, just before the sell-off. I had the opportunity to be in the estimates committee, questioning the Minister of Energy about the sell-off. There is a \$2.6-billion expense in the Ministry of Energy's estimates. For those who don't know this, every year government ministries put out publications showing how they're going to spend their money in the year to come, and we get an opportunity in committee to actually sit down with ministers and attempt to get answers. I'm not saying we get answers; occasionally, by mistake, an answer is given, but we try to get answers in estimates. Some \$2.6 billion was an expense for the Ministry of Energy because they were going to give \$2.6 billion—they weren't just going to; they gave—to Hydro One very few minutes before it was going to be sold, put on the market, so that Hydro One wouldn't have to pay the departure tax.

When the Tories set up the privatization of the hydro system, they put in a requirement that if you sell a utility, you have to pay a tax to help reduce the debt that's outstanding from the old Ontario Hydro. That's something that local distribution companies have a problem with. They want to take advantage of those sales—sorry, if local municipalities want to sell those utilities, they're going to have to pay a tax. But the Ontario government gave the \$2.6 billion to Hydro One, which gave the money back, so in effect, they didn't pay a penny on departure tax. The investors got a \$2.6-billion gift from the Ontario government, the government that's selling Hydro One to raise money for transit. "No, no, no—\$2.6 billion? Here's a pass. Enjoy it, guys."

That \$2.6 billion could have been used to reduce Hydro debt. It could have been used to flow through back to rates. It could have been used to flow through back to rates, something that this government refused to do. Speaker, with these guys, the games never end and the rates keep rising.

The Liberal government says that the Ontario Energy Board will protect consumers, and I actually heard the mayor of Toronto using exactly those words this morning, that the OEB will guard against soaring rates. So let's look at some recent history, if you will. When the smart meter initiative came forward, did the Ontario

Energy Board do an analysis of the impact of that initiative on rates? Did they? In fact, Speaker, they didn't. They didn't actually take on the responsibility. They were simply told to make this happen and they did their part to make it happen. They didn't stand up for consumers. That added \$2 billion to hydro rates in Ontario with minimal savings, minimal positive impact on the system—and I emphasize the word “minimal.”

When Hydro One was being sold and we asked the OEB to review the sale, because it's their responsibility to review those significant decisions that will impact on rates, no, they declined. There's a guardian for you. “Here's a big issue. It's going to change hydro rates in Ontario. You need to be looking at this.” Did the OEB act as a regulator? Did the OEB actually stand up for consumers and assess the impact of that deal? Not for an instant.

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Recent changes in legislation gave cabinet, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the power to say, “We need to build a transmission line here and you, OEB, don't get to question anymore whether or not building that transmission line is a rational use of resources for the system. You get to assess whether or not the purchase of this bolt or that tower makes sense, but you don't get to look at the fundamentals.” That is a regulator whose powers are constrained, whose ability to protect consumers is cut back.

Speaker, energy decision-making is politicized. There are lobbyists who will push for this or that investment. There are power brokers who are able to drive cabinet decisions. To say that the OEB is going to protect consumers from this new, privatized world is—I'm sorry, I would have to use unparliamentary language and I won't, but—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Questionable.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Questionable. I've had the suggestion of the word “questionable.” I would say “questionable” is something that you, Speaker, would accept, and it's about as generous as you can get.

Speaker, that's a concern about turning this all over to the OEB to protect us. There aren't the protections there. I would say that at best, the Ontario Energy Board, the regulator, is a drowsy chaperone, and at worst they're just a glove puppet.

Actually, that's the one other instance that occurred to me. Recently there was a decision not to put the cost of cap-and-trade on people's gas bills, to bury it in the delivery charges. What regulator would say that? There weren't people there who were saying, “No, no, bury it.” No, it was the OEB staff who was doing that. Whose interest does that serve? Does it serve the interest of the government of the day? I would say it does. I would say that speaks very profoundly to the lack of the OEB's ability to actually protect the people of this province.

The other major factor that we need to understand is that we have been overbuilding capacity in this sector, not reducing capacity when it was clearly surplus. That has given us a problem that actually has a term in the

electricity sector: “surplus baseload generation.” We generate an awful lot; we don't have the demand for it. In fact, in the last decade demand has been dropping for electricity here in Ontario, which will surprise most people. But as auto plants and auto parts supplier plants have shut down, as manufacturing is shut down in southwestern Ontario—Xstrata shut down in Timmins; Stelco shut down in Hamilton—there's less and less demand for power. It's a simple reality.

I want to just quote from a recent report from the Consumer Policy Institute. I don't agree with everything they have to say but I thought they had some interesting commentary on the fundamental problems we face in Ontario with electricity. In their executive summary, and I'll quote here: “Ontario electricity customers are paying more each month to cover the costs of selling cheap power to out-of-province ratepayers.

“Since 2005, Ontario customers have unwittingly paid \$6.3 billion to cover the cost of selling the province's surplus electricity to customers in neighbouring states and provinces. Most of that bill—\$5.8 billion, or nearly \$1,200 for every household in the province—has been incurred since 2009, as demand for electricity in Ontario has declined, while generation capacity in the province has continued to grow.

“Ontario's power surplus is largely a result of provincial directives, which have directed Ontario's energy agencies to sign contracts with a growing number of electricity generators, promising them a guaranteed, above-market rate for their output. The power surplus has pushed the average wholesale price—the value of power on the province's electricity market—to a record low in 2016.”

As an example, the gas plant that was cancelled in Oakville and is now being built in Napanee, far above market, surplus power to Ontario's needs—frankly, Speaker, that's one example. When the Bruce nuclear complex brought on two more reactors in 2012, in a market where the power wasn't needed, we were stuck with the extra bills. Take a look at 2012-13. The market cost of power goes down; the global adjustment goes up; more power is sold outside Ontario. We're putting in place generating capacity that we don't need.

I'll just note, Speaker, this isn't just Ontario. In New York, they have a big power surplus because, again, they've lost manufacturing. We're no smarter than them. We could be smarter. If we owned the system, if we hadn't privatized most generation, we could be making these decisions, but we haven't.

To go back to the report: “To offset the growing gap between what the province has promised to pay generators and what that power is worth in the wholesale market, provincial ratepayers pay a charge called the global adjustment, which has grown, on average, 20% annually over the last five years. The global adjustment now accounts for nearly 90% of the revenue earned by exporting power.

“The combination of an increasing number of generators receiving a fixed rate for their output, depressed

market prices and the decline in electricity demand in Ontario has created a large and growing surplus of power in the province. Instead of curbing their production in response to low demand and prices, generators have maintained their production levels, requiring an increase in exported power.”

The math is fairly straightforward. I know that the Conservatives like to say this is all green power, but green power is actually a fairly small part of total power production in Ontario. We're talking gas plants. We're talking nuclear plants. We're talking about a lot of surplus power, which all of us are paying for.

“Ontario ratepayers are left covering the difference between what the province has promised domestic generators for their output and what that power is worth when it is exported, since export customers don't pay the global adjustment. Ontario ratepayers are now paying the lion's share of the cost of exporting electricity.” Next time you look at your bill, realize there is someone in New York or Michigan who's very grateful to you for having subsidized their electricity.

Speaker, if you look back at the history of power planning in this province over the last decade, you'll see that a number of years ago it was understood that as nuclear power plants at Darlington and Bruce had to be refurbished, as the Pickering plant came to the end of its lifespan, generation would have to be in place to deal with that drop in production. So we built more gas plants than we needed because they were going to be used to take up that slack. We built green energy, which we need because we're going to make a transition away from fossil fuels. In the end, the refurbishment has been pushed back into the future. The Pickering plant is now looking at a government decision to be open until 2024. All of the elements are there for a continued surplus of power, which we're paying for.

If you actually look at your hydro bill, and the Independent Electricity System Operator had this in their recent Ontario power outlook report, power costs have increased 32% in Ontario from 2006 to 2015—32% because of increases in the cost of the system: more generation, more power lines etc. That's over a decade. Power costs have gone up 40% because of a drop in demand. Fewer and fewer companies, fewer and fewer households are buying as much power as they did in the past. So the bulk of the problem in Ontario has been this drop in demand not matched with an appropriate level of generation. People need to understand that. As we lose industry, which is tragic, and as we are more efficient, which is positive, there hasn't been an adjustment to the system, and that has led to much higher bills.

Now, in the bill itself, the government's new rate-relief package includes an 8% rebate for residents and small non-residential consumers. The new rebate is enabled by legislation that's nearly identical to the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act. I said earlier that there would be an act that would be recycling. That is today's recycling. We have a bill that has come back with some modifications. That was an act that provided a 10%

rebate between 2011 and 2015—2011. Yes, there was an election in 2011. That bill came in just in time for that election, and it stuck around long enough for a second election. So it was a two-election-cycle bill—very efficient from the government's point of view. They only had to go through reading the bill once, but it gave them cover for two elections. However, with the outcome of the election in Scarborough–Rouge River, we're back to having to make those kinds of payments.

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When the rebate was announced on September 12, finance minister Charles Sousa was repeatedly asked whether the rebate would be permanent. He ducked the question, saying, “We haven't established a date to end.” The next day, the Premier insisted that the rebate would be permanent, although she didn't explain why her finance minister was unaware of this the day before. I can only speculate, Speaker. I can only guess that the balloon was up in the air. There were enough bullets shot at it, and they realized that putting in an end date would be politically dangerous, and they decided not to do that.

This is a rebate. It's not an HST exemption. We expect it will be more costly to administer and more cumbersome to administer as opposed to simply reaching out to the federal government and getting an exemption.

I've heard the Liberal government say, “No, no; we're putting in the rebate because it's quick. If we go to the federal government, then it's going to take a longer time.” You actually could, if you wanted to be quick, put this in place now, with it to lift when an HST exemption comes into place—or surely the Premier, who worked very hard for the current Prime Minister to get his job, would be able to call in some favours. Whatever, Speaker. To say that an HST rebate or exemption negotiated with a federal government is a block doesn't hold water, in my opinion.

There is a huge advantage, though, in being able to put an item on people's hydro bills. This government is going to have a line on hydro bills: “Rebate.” Whether there will be a smiley face of the Premier on the bill or not, I don't know yet. That's still to be decided; I know the OEB is going to wrestle with that. The big advantage in not having an exemption is that ability to put a line there. Just as they were able to delete a line on gas bills, they'll be able to put a line here. Again, it speaks to my concern that the OEB really, in many ways, is just a toy of the government, doing what it wills.

The government has noted that it's enhancing the existing rural rate relief program to reduce delivery charges for low-density customers, giving them an additional \$30 or so a month. That's something all the other ratepayers in Ontario will pay for. It's about \$1 a month on everyone else's bills.

The government is also expanding the industrial conservation initiative, which allows large energy consumers to reduce their share of the global adjustment by reducing their electricity demand during moments of peak demand, which I think is a good idea. If there are companies out there that can reduce their demand when we're at

peak, it reduces the need for generating capacity. But as you're well aware, Speaker, all those generating plants have been built, and whether they produce power or not, they get paid. It comes out of the global adjustment. We may reduce demand for the product, which is a good thing, but I have real doubts that it will reduce the costs of the electricity system itself. Some people will do better, but the costs will still have to be picked up.

The bill is fairly simple, fairly straightforward in that. I think I've outlined the background to the bill, the political context of the bill, the context of measures in place—privatization, overbuilding of capacity—that have driven up the cost of electricity here in Ontario. I want to say that those who are counting on a fairly nice reduction in their rural Ontario hydro bill should be aware that Hydro One was granted a 19% increase in their rates by the Ontario Energy Board—6% a year over the next three years, so a little bit more than 6% if you're getting to 19%. These reductions will not be pretty quick.

Now, people should be well aware that the Ontario Energy Board was criticized by the Auditor General in her last report for not being very thorough with Hydro One in its examination of their bills. Hydro One asked for rate increases to replace transformers several years in a row, and those transformers weren't replaced. Come in one year and say, "I need this money to replace these transformers," you get the money. Next year, you come back and say, "I need the money to replace these transformers." Was Hydro One asked, "Hey, we thought we gave you that money last year"? No, they weren't.

I had an opportunity to question the head of the Ontario Energy Board at the public accounts committee. She assured me that they did not audit the proposals by the bodies that were seeking higher rates. They didn't audit what was there. They could be asked multiple times for rate increases to pay for the same thing; the Ontario Energy Board would never know.

I was told, "You know, we have these intervenors who are looking at these bills." That's extraordinary to me, that the regulator is not doing the thorough and due diligence that's required to deal with double counting; in fact, is relying on intervenors, who operate on very limited budgets, to keep applicants for rate increases honest. To be kind and to be parliamentary: It's a broken system—broken, at best. How can you expect a regulator who doesn't even dig into applications to protect you? How? You can't.

There are a variety of risks to the rates in the future that this government doesn't address in this bill and doesn't address in its hydro policies. There's an expectation about what levels of power we will consume in the future. As I've said to you, the biggest piece of the increase in hydro rates in the last decade has been the drop in demand for power and the fact that we're stuck paying for a system that has fixed costs, even though demand for it keeps dropping. The potential is there for that demand to keep dropping.

There are counterbalancing elements, but if you actually follow what's going on in the electricity systems

around the world, there is a huge drive to drop that demand. LED lighting dramatically cuts the amount of power needed for lighting. There are other energy efficiency technologies coming on stream that drive down demand. There's the growth of low-cost solar and battery storage that has got the electricity sector throughout the United States spooked.

In fact, it was about three or four years ago—I think the Edison Electric Institute had a meeting of all the big utilities in the United States to look at the changing world of electricity production and demand. They looked at what happened to the telecom sector with deregulation and how a change in technology—a move from land lines to cellphones, from cellphones to smart phones—radically changed the economics of that sector. They understood that that radical rewriting of the electricity system was something that they were going to have to come to grips with.

Now, it's interesting to me that the Ontario Energy Board, aware of this, has started moving people's delivery rates on their bills to a fixed charge. So if you are paying for electricity, you know that on your bill there's the cost of getting the electricity through the wires from the generator to your house. In the past, that's been much more related to the amount of power you used, but the Ontario Energy Board is changing that so that it's fixed. As they say, small users will be paying more, large users will be paying less. That's going to have an impact in rural and northern Ontario. They aren't the big users. They use power, but they're not going to be at the top of the scale.

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Why did the OEB do that? If you read their report, it's pretty clear that they understand that the coming drop in demand for grid power is going to have a big impact on the economics of the system here in Ontario—a very big impact. This government—and we'll see what happens with their next energy plan, later this year—has not been paying attention to that. It continues to re-sign contracts for non-utility generators for gas-fired power that we may well not need.

In doing their assessment of the refurbishment of nuclear reactors at Bruce and Darlington, did they actually look at the alternatives? Did they look at what is going to happen in the future? Did they do a solid business case?

I have to say, Speaker, there was no solid business case done. There was a comparison only to gas-fired generation. They didn't look at conservation. They didn't look at distributed energy. This is a government that has been derelict in its duties when it comes to the electricity system.

Speaker, this bill will not address the underlying issues that we face that are driving up hydro rates at an unsustainable rate. It is dealing with an immediate political problem. It's hoping, at a year and a half or two years out from the next election, that they will have done enough to ensure their survival.

But I think that between the increases we're seeing from Hydro One and the other increases we can expect,

coming up this fall and next spring—people remember that rates are set twice a year—this reduction will soon be eaten up. If the government doesn't deal with the fundamentals, it can't deal with the issue with a band-aid.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for his comments today. Obviously, there's going to be a variety of opinions as to how we're doing on this and whether we should move ahead with it. I'll tell you that the people in Oakville certainly would like to see this passed. There's no doubt about that.

If you go back to 2003 and before that, I think all three parties have had an opportunity to try to do the best they could with the energy system in the province of Ontario. It's a changing landscape, obviously. We're finding things out environmentally, things about climate change, that we simply didn't know in the past, and we have to make sure that the energy system takes that into account.

What we did know in 2003, when we took over, was there were health care costs associated with the current system we have. There were childhood asthma rates at the time that I think were through the roof, certainly in Oakville, which is in a bit of a valley. Childhood asthma rates were just not what they should be. They were far too high. A lot of that could be attributed very clearly to the burning of coal. If you look at childhood asthma rates now, they've gone down as a result of some of the changes that have been made.

Smog days in the province of Ontario: I remember driving in from Oakville, there would be a yellow cloud hanging over the city of Toronto.

Mr. Grant Crack: You could see it.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: You could see it, and you would get there, and—

Interjection.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Sarnia wasn't much different, Bob.

You'd drive in there and you'd think, "My God, I have to spend a day in that." You don't see that anymore. You don't see the smog days anymore. Childhood asthma rates have gone down as a result of the changes that we've had to make.

I remember when the NDP were in power. They were buying rainforests in Costa Rica. I remember when the Conservatives were in power. We had diesel generators. Speaker, I think everybody is trying to do the best they can.

There are going to be other opinions on this, obviously, but getting off coal is the best thing that we could have possibly done. Taking the HST off the energy bills is something that the people in the province of Ontario really want to see. It's something that I know will be welcome in the rural areas and in places like where I live in Ontario.

Speaker, this bill deserves to be supported.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and comment on the remarks from the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I'll tell you, this is one of the biggest issues in my riding office in my constituency, and I'm sure it is in those of my colleagues, and across the aisle, or we wouldn't see this movement on this so-called rebate. It's not going to last for long. It will be eaten up by the increases.

This is one of the biggest issues. I was out for dinner the other night in a restaurant, and I couldn't believe it. I've never had this happen before. I had two seniors sitting there, and the lady asked me, where everyone else could hear her, "Mr. Bailey, can you go back and tell the Premier, Kathleen Wynne, we need to do something on energy prices?" She said, "My husband and I are living on a fixed income and we can't afford it." I've never had that happen—

Mr. Wayne Gates: You privatized it. You guys started it. You want to sell it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll deal with you later.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The issue is, these price increases are going to continue to go on, and we're not going to get anywhere with just these minor details. We need to do something more serious if we're going to cut these rates. I'll tell you, there are a lot of different opinions out there, but we've started down this road, and it's not going to be good. I'll tell you, I've had an online petition and almost 3,000 people have signed it.

This is too little, too late. We're talking 36 cents a day for these decreases in power.

The only reason this government has even moved on this is because they've seen that this is going to be a problem and it's not going to go away. We're going to see another increase on the 1st of November and ongoing.

They've signed and continue to sign these ungodly contracts with these private generators for power. I think there's a plant down in Sarnia—Lambton that was moved from Mississauga, and I don't know whether it will ever run, because there are concerns with the safety of the plant, the way it was constructed. It was placed down there to get out of another scandal.

Madam Speaker, these are the reasons that electricity in this province is out of hand, and it's not going to be solved with this.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure for me to rise today, on behalf of the constituents I represent in London West, to offer some comments on the remarks by my colleague the member from Toronto—Danforth, who is certainly, as he demonstrated in his speech this morning, one of the most knowledgeable and articulate members that we have in this House. He knows the history of the electricity system. He knows how we arrived at this mess, this crisis that the government refuses to acknowledge, how we have arrived to this point today, and he has also

pointed out the complete and utter inadequacy of the remedy that is before us in this bill.

He talked about the fact that the clean energy rebate was in place in 2011 and up until 2015. It helped the Liberals through two provincial elections. After the loss of the by-election in Scarborough–Rouge River, they went back to something that had worked in the past: a 10% rebate that went off people’s hydro bill in 2015. The Liberals thought, “Oh, the solution is to bring in an 8% rebate that will go onto hydro bills in 2016.”

The cynicism of responding to an election loss by recycling a policy that had worked in the past is just unbelievable.

The member from Toronto–Danforth shared some of the stories of the pain that his constituents are experiencing—the potential health complications; being forced to make choices between buying food or paying their hydro bills. These are the same stories that we are hearing in London West, that I hear on a daily basis, and that all of us in this chamber, I am certain, hear regularly from constituents.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: It’s my privilege to stand up on behalf of the people of Don Valley East. I’d like to respond to the member from Toronto–Danforth in regard to his comments around this bill.

The member from London West said that the speaker from Toronto–Danforth is very knowledgeable on the issue. Yes, he is very knowledgeable on the issue, but he’s only giving you half the story.

We’ve heard—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): This direction, please.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Madam Speaker, we came from a place, back in the early 2000s, where there was yellow smog all over the city of Toronto and the GTA. I haven’t seen those smog days for years, and it’s because we cut down on our coal plants. There were 26 plants that were cut down. I believe it’s the equivalent of removing about a million cars off the roads of Ontario—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Seven million.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Seven million. I stand corrected, Madam Speaker. It’s seven million.

It’s interesting. The NDP have been running around the province for months, saying, “Remove the HST off of those bills. Remove the HST.” And the day we go forward and remove the HST portion off of those bills, they’re still not happy.

The problem with the NDP is that they don’t actually have any plans. They have no plan for the energy grid here in the province of Ontario, and when they actually put forward an idea and we embrace it, it’s not good enough for them.

Madam Speaker, what I think the NDP should do is they should all get together as a team and actually put some policy together and some plans together around energy here in the province of Ontario, because just

criticizing what we do and not actually putting forward good plans—and when they put one plan together, one idea together and we actually embrace that idea, they say, “Well, you know what? It’s not a good idea.”

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member for Toronto–Danforth to wrap up.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity. My thanks to the members from Oakville, Sarnia–Lambton and London West and to the Minister of Children and Youth Services for their comments.

I have to say, it’s interesting to me that both the member from Oakville and the minister used the standard Liberal talking point that prices are high because we had to get rid of coal. Frankly, we supported getting rid of coal. He wasn’t here at the time, but Howard Hampton spoke very persuasively, very eloquently about the need to invest in conservation and efficiency, to drive down demand, as a way of phasing out coal. Coal cost about 2.5 cents a kilowatt hour; energy efficiency cost about 3 cents. It’s pretty close. You could actually dramatically cut the need for any coal power and cut out the coal plants at a cost differential that was minimal. But, no, they put in gas plants at 11 to 12 cents a kilowatt hour, a very expensive alternative.

The only defence the Liberals have for the mismanagement of the file is one that their pollsters pointed out to them: to take it back to coal and say this is all because we phased out coal. That’s not true, Speaker—not true. The Liberals continue on a policy course of privatization of the system, one that has cut the flexibility of the people of Ontario to actually adjust electricity generation to their needs, an approach that has built a profit into hydro bills which didn’t exist before, and they are now selling off the transmission system, the nervous system for the province’s electricity grid. Frankly, those consequences will be very, very ugly. We’re seeing them now with the increase most recently given to Hydro One. We’re seeing them with the big gift given to the Hydro One investors.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I’d like to welcome Neal Roberts to Queen’s Park. Neal is the chief of emergency medical services for Middlesex-London and, importantly, also the president of the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce to you and, through you, to members of the Legislative Assembly, Ping Wu, who is chair of PEGO. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I note that my page from Mississauga–Streetsville, Adam Holan, is the page captain today. In honour of that, his parents, Anna and

Rafid Holan, are with us in the members' gallery this morning. Members, please welcome them.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to acknowledge Heather Morrison, the chair of the children's aid society in Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Robert Bailey: On behalf of the MPP for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, I'd like to introduce page captain Victoria Bailey, and also her father, Greg Bailey, who is in the public gallery with us this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: It's National Coaches Week, and I'm pleased to introduce a group of coaches who have made positive impacts on athletes across our province and athletes as people.

I'd like to welcome 2016 Ontario Coaching Excellence Award winners Laura McPhie, Ken MacDonald and Casey Curtis, as well as 2012 Ontario Coaching Excellence Award winner Miranda Kamal.

I'd also like to welcome Susan Kitchen, Mercedes Watson, Eric McLoughlin, Eric Belahov, Clarissa Oleksiuk and Ann Doggett from the Coaches Association of Ontario.

Our government applauds your efforts. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Patrick Brown: It's my pleasure to introduce Carol Ellis, who is the mother of our page from Simcoe North.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to welcome members from the francophone community who are here today to help us celebrate le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux membres de la communauté francophone qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la journée franco-ontarienne.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Bienvenue.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier.

Families in Ontario can't afford their hydro bills, and nearly 567,000 households are in arrears. When is enough enough? How many people have to not be able to afford their hydro bills before the Premier and this government will take real action? Is it 600,000; 700,000; 900,000? Will it take a million Ontarians in arrears before this government will finally act? I want to know from the Deputy Premier: What is the number before you realize your hydro policy is a complete mess?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If the choice is to continue what you were doing yesterday, I will continue

to do what I did. We'll move to warnings if I need to. That's my last warning about warnings.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've discussed before, we have a very clear plan to make sure we have reliable energy being delivered in this province. We inherited an electricity system that had been badly neglected by the previous government. We've made historic investments so we can ensure that, even on the very hottest day or the coldest winter day, people have access to reliable energy.

We've also eliminated smog days. We haven't had a smog day, Speaker, for the very reason that we've eliminated coal-fired plants in this province. Yes, that is more expensive energy, but we've saved \$4 billion in health costs because people are not going to the emergency department with asthma.

There's a cost and there is a benefit, Speaker, and we have made a choice that—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll be moving to warnings.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier: Since I can't get an answer about the 567,000 Ontario families in arrears on their hydro bills, I'm going to try a different angle. Yesterday, the Premier said that we "have just come through one of the hottest summers ever and we've had no blackouts." But on September 3, a Toronto Star headline read, "Power Slowly Restored at CityPlace after Blackout." In fact, Mr. Speaker, there have been not one, not two, not three, but four power outages in a span of two weeks.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Odd as it is, I'd like to hear the question. Your own side is not letting me do that.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: In fact, we've had four power outages in a span of two weeks.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier was: Was the Premier left in the dark about these blackouts this summer?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If you want to talk about being left in the dark, then I think there is somebody else in this Legislature who has been left in the dark—or, at least, claims to have been left in the dark on his position on the sex ed issue. We have seen a historic flip-flop—four different positions—on a pretty important issue.

I think that is begging the question: What other secret promises have been made in the backrooms? Who knows what deals have been made? It's clear that the Leader of the Opposition is being kept in the dark—or at least, so he claims.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier: There are 567,000 Ontario families in arrears and can't pay their hydro bills, and this minister wants to take cheap partisan shots.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. The members will come to order.

Complete the question.

1040

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Liberals don't want to talk about hydro. I want them to think about Alex from Bobcaygeon. He's on ODSP. He's had his hydro threatened to be cut off. He uses the help the government has to offer, but it's not enough. Alex has had an organ transplant and knows he has to eat properly. But Global News says that for Alex, it's simply come down to eating or having his lights on.

My question is for the Deputy Premier. How can you turn your back on little guys like Alex? Why won't you help them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're very proud of the investments that we've made to support people with low income on their electricity bills, including the Ontario Electricity Support Program. I would urge members of the opposition to make sure their constituents know about this important program.

We've also recently announced that we're removing the provincial portion of the HST on electricity bills.

Speaker, we have a very clear plan. What's not so clear is what's happening across the way, and this is a real concern. What we really want to know is what other promises have been made by the chief of staff maybe, by the Leader of the Opposition. Who knows whether they've promised developers that they'll repeal, or maybe scrap, the Greenbelt Act? Who knows what promises have been made to developers on that front?

Who knows whether you've promised secretly, behind closed doors, the business community that you'll strip away labour bargaining rights—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Two things: I'm going to use this as a moment to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just by that last indicator, even when I'm standing, I'm being ignored, so let's make sure that you are reminded. I'm going to move to warnings as quickly as possible, because this is getting unruly.

Number two: government policy, please, when you're responding to questions.

New question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Deputy Premier. This week the Liberals appointed David Herle as their chief electoral strategist. Then this morning, we learned that the Liberal government has given nearly \$3 million in government contracts to Herle and his company, the Gandalf Group. In fact, he was billing the government at \$420 an hour. Families are being forced to pay \$420 a month for their hydro, and David Herle makes it in an hour. Why? Because he's a Liberal crony.

Mr. Speaker, is this the way that the Liberal government and the Deputy Premier—who happens to be the Liberal campaign co-chair—is this their way of saying thank you and padding his salary for the next election?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid that the Leader of the Opposition simply doesn't know what the process is for contracts such as this. All public opinion research conducted by the government of Ontario is procured through a fair and transparent competitive process—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is warned. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is warned.

I'll get you on the next round.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Every company must be a qualified vendor of record and compete for a project against no less than five competitors. The final decision about which vendor is best suited for a project is made by a committee of at least three non-partisan public servants.

I think the Leader of the Opposition should familiarize himself with the process by which contracts such as this are confirmed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier: The last time the Liberals got caught giving David Herle taxpayer money, they claimed it was a fair, transparent and competitive process. But according to Brian Lilley, senior Liberals who know how cabinet office works said they "disputed the idea"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: "Senior Liberals ... disputed the idea that the process was completely non-partisan and not subject to political direction from the Premier." So I imagine this time was no different.

Mr. Speaker, when applying for government contracts, is one of the questions "Are you David Herle, the Liberal campaign chair?" Or do the Premier and the Deputy Premier intervene after the application process?

Maybe you can elaborate on how you find ways through Liberal spin to give your campaign electoral strategist \$420 an hour of taxpayer money. It's shameful.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Polling is an important way for a government to gauge the effectiveness of their programs and what people are thinking on various issues. I must say that I think everyone recognizes that every government does that because it's a very valuable tool.

Let me give you an example where we learned from public polling. The #WhoWillYouHelp campaign has made a tremendous difference in attitudes in this province. Before the campaign, 37% of Ontarians felt that they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Before the campaign, 37% of Ontarians felt they had an obligation to intervene when they were a witness to sexual harassment. After the #WhoWillYouHelp campaign, that number became 58%. We knew that because we did an Ipsos Reid poll, and that is important information to test the impact of our efforts.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon is warned.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Deputy Premier: Putting the Liberal spin aside, \$3 million of taxpayer resources, \$420 an hour to their chief Liberal electoral strategist, is just not right. If the process was fair and transparent, as the Liberals say, they need to give us proof. After all, the taxpayers did pay for this polling and research, not the Liberal Party. They have a right to know what it said.

My question is, will the Liberals release the results for all the polling and research done by David Herle and the Gandalf Group? It was paid for by the people and the people should see this data. If you have nothing to hide, release it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Economic Development and Growth is warned.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, when it comes to releasing information, we're actually hearing from someone who has released way more information than imaginable because he's released information supporting one position on sex ed, then he released information supporting another—

Interjection.

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

A reminder to the Deputy Premier: policy.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the Leader of the Opposition might want to check public accounts, because if you looked at public accounts, what you would see is a number of research firms that have contracts with the provincial government. Forum Research, Ipsos Reid, Strategic Counsel, EKOS, Environics, Harris/Decima—a

number of firms compete. Different firms are successful with different bids. That's the way the process works. It's fair, it's transparent, it's non-partisan.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Acting Premier.

Less than two weeks ago, the Premier of this province was basically telling the people of Ontario that things were going to get a reset. Instead, the last two weeks have been one Liberal PR exercise after another. Instead of a reset, people fear things are actually getting worse here in Ontario.

The people of Ontario want an actual reset—one that ends the sale of Hydro One, one that ends the cuts to hospitals, one that ends the kinds of cuts that this government has been undertaking and actually starts to restore hope for the people of this province. When will this government start putting the wishes, the best interests of the people of this province ahead of the Liberal Party's?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The throne speech was an important announcement of initiatives that really are responding to the needs of the people of this province. Some 100,000 new child care spaces: That is a huge investment that directly responds to the needs of the people of this province, but also responds to the requests of the third party.

Here's the problem: They are very good at opposing. Even when we do something they've been advocating for, they oppose it.

So 100,000 new child care spaces is an important initiative. Taking the HST off energy bills—the provincial portion of the HST—is something that the NDP have been advocating for and now they oppose it.

1050

We have a clear plan. We're moving forward and it's working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over half a million people in Ontario are behind on their hydro bills. Last year 60,000 people had their hydro cut off because they couldn't keep up with the bills. The Minister of Energy doesn't even know how many people have had their hydro cut off this year so far. But it's only going to get worse, as Hydro One continues to be sold off by this Liberal government.

This is a moment of truth for the government. This is the moment of truth for the Liberals. Will this government do the right thing, stop the privatization of Hydro One and start taking action to get those bills down?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the leader of the third party for the question. It is important to recognize that the broadening of Hydro One will continue to build infrastructure right across the province. It's been great for us in northern Ontario. My colleague the Minister of Transportation announced \$173 million to

help finish Highway 69. We're doing great things with the broadening of the sale of Hydro One.

When it comes to 60,000 people in this province having their electricity disconnected, you don't want to see one person have to go through that. That's why we've put forward so many programs. The LEAP program, for example, helps individuals with emergency funds to help pay their bills.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We're doing everything we can to ensure we keep that number down. Right now in the province, that's less than 1%—that number is less than 1%—and that's why we recognize it's difficult and acted with a three-point plan.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People take pride in our health care and education systems in this province and they expect our government to make them a priority. While this government is focused on the sale of Hydro One and the future of the Liberal Party, hospitals are run down and overcrowded, and kids are waiting hours and hours to get on a school bus that takes them to a crumbling school. These are the basics, the fundamentals that any government should be able to deliver to the people of their province.

The Liberals promised change. Why are schools and hospitals still being robbed of the resources they need?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to the broadening of the sale of Hydro One, every dollar realized from our current assets will be reinvested in Ontario's infrastructure. This sale will support the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history: more than \$160 billion over 12 years. It will also support 110,000 jobs a year. Our goals in broadening the ownership of Hydro One have focused on an improved, more customer-focused company and more infrastructure.

I was just up in northeastern Ontario a couple of weeks ago. I announced \$5.4 million in North Bay, I announced over \$2 million in Kapuskasing, and we'll continue to see more of those investments in infrastructure as we continue to improve and build Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I remember saying this previously in a question period. I left some leeway for diversity in question period last week, because of the throne speech, but right now I'm going to remind all members that your supplementary questions should be related to your initial question in each of the areas in which you speak. I'm going to ask to make sure we stay back on that. The throne speech itself, during debate, allows for that diversity, but not question period, so I'm going to remind the members to stay on track from your original question.

New question: the leader of the third party.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. When young parents can't afford child care, it makes it harder to build a good life. When child care is

unaffordable, it means parents can't pay down their credit card, they can't save for a house and if the car breaks down or someone needs to go to the dentist, it becomes a big problem. The Premier claims that she's creating 100,000 spaces for child care, but young families who could barely afford child care before the session started are still in the exact same predicament.

Why isn't this government making affordable, not-for-profit child care a priority?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was here for the throne speech and I know that the leader of the third party was here for the throne speech too. The Lieutenant Governor of this province announced, in our throne speech, 100,000 new child care spaces. This kind of reinforces the point that I made earlier, which is, even when we do something that the NDP has advocated for in the past, they oppose it.

We are moving forward, starting in 2017, building 100,000 new licensed child care spaces for the reasons that the leader of the third party has given.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal government might look at their throne speech as a chance to get headlines. I think it was actually an opportunity to make the big changes that people need to see, and that's the problem. Affordability of child care is the huge issue here in Ontario and this government completely ignored it.

For the government, it happens to be all about them when it should be about the people of this province, who are worried about their future and worried about the future of the next generation. Without some big changes it's only going to get tougher for folks here in Ontario.

I need to know, and I think the people need to know, whether or not this government is ready to make those big changes that put the people at the front of the priority list.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: What could be bigger than a commitment to 100,000 new child care spaces in this province? When we look at the need for child care, from infants to four-year-olds, that is going to double the meeting of the demand to 40% from 20% today.

Our focus is ensuring that we provide access to good, quality child care spaces across this province.

Interjection: Affordable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has led the way when it comes to investments in child care. Since 2003, we have doubled our funding—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Privatizing child care and not addressing the unaffordability of it is something that Conservatives would do. They're the types who campaign on that kind of stuff. They're the types who actually started the privatization of Hydro One in this province, but that's not what this government told people

that they were all about. Cutting services like health care and education—that's what Conservatives do, whether it's in Ottawa or here in Ontario. It's not what the people wanted, but it's what they're getting.

Things are getting tougher for families, and the government is not stepping up. Before the House came back, they said that they finally understood what people were facing. They said that they would change. So why has everything stayed the same?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Since 2003, we have doubled the funding and the investments in child care to almost \$1 billion. We have increased access to licensed child care spaces by 87%. As of September 1, we have ended fees for wait-lists in this province, which is leading Canada in this area.

We are committed to providing supports to our children in this province, and that's evidenced by our investments and our commitment to 100,000 more child care spaces over the next five years. We're committed. We're making those changes because we want to ensure that our earliest learners have what they need, and those investments are being made today.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday, I was looking at the EQAO results, and I've got to say they were rather disappointing. I'm disappointed that a former education minister under the so-called education Premier could fail our students in Ontario so dramatically.

Since the Liberal math curriculum came into effect, the numbers have steadily gone down. The test results have steadily gone down. Half of Ontario's grade 6 students failed to meet our provincial standard. That's despite the fact that education funding has almost doubled while we're educating 70,000 fewer students than we were 20 years ago.

We don't need another re-announcement. We need to start getting results. This government is failing our students. When will the government stop failing our students when it comes to math?

1100

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question, because when it comes to Ontario's education, we are well above the OECD average in our scores overall. We're very proud of that fact.

The EQAO results are shining a spotlight on an area that we need to improve, and we are very well aware of that. That is why our former Minister of Education announced in the spring a commitment to a renewed math strategy—\$60 million so that we can provide the support in our schools where we need it.

As of September, we are ensuring that we have dedicated math leads in schools. We're ensuring that there are 60 minutes of protected time in all elementary schools. That's 300 minutes a week that's focused on math—because we know that our young people need this support so that they can succeed in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the minister: Our kids are failing at math in dramatic fashion. We have students graduating who can barely make change without the use of a calculator. That's completely unacceptable in Ontario.

A report from the McKinsey institute shows that the countries with the lowest youth unemployment rates also put the most emphasis on their math curriculum. We're not doing that here. It's not the students' fault that 50% of them aren't at grade level; it's not the teachers' fault; it's the curriculum that needs to be changed. Students aren't even required to memorize their multiplication tables anymore. Simply throwing more money at the problem isn't going to make it go away.

I know that 50% is a much better result than the Premier's current approval ratings in Ontario, but why is the government leaving half of our students behind when it comes to math?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to quote from the Ottawa Citizen, Mr. Speaker, because we have to listen to our educators. Here's what they say:

"We're looking forward very much to the renewed math strategy. We know the ministry is providing mathematics support to all schools, which is fantastic. And looking at particular schools that may need intensive support.' ... Getting central help with teaching skills will be useful; there are techniques that work very well with 'vulnerable' learners—experiential learning, visual aids—that will be useful for other students, too."

When it comes to our record on education since 2003, when our graduation rates were 68%—as of this year, they're at 85.5%.

We are investing in our education system because we know that we want our young people to be prepared for the world that they will enter, and they will have the supports to do so.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the finance minister. Yesterday, the minister announced that the government had signed a memorandum of understanding with Bedrock Industries in relation to the restructuring of US Steel Canada. Over 20,000 people are waiting to see how this affects their jobs, their pensions, their families and their futures. We must ensure that equal treatment of workers and pensioners is done in both plants. From day one, they have sought the protection of jobs, the restoration of post-employment benefits, and the full funding of their pension plans.

Can the minister promise the employees and retirees that this memorandum protects their retirement promises and will fully fund the pension plans, and can the minister promise that current operations will be preserved at both plants in Hamilton and Nanticoke?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's an important question that the member asks. It's something that we've been deliberating for a number of years now since US Steel went into CCAA. We've taken steps to try to protect the pensioners, salaried workers and those jobs.

The intent of the MOU is all about protecting jobs. It's all about protecting pensions and also protecting the environment, while developing those lands that are so precious in Hamilton. That is exactly what's being put forward, and that's why we've moved forward with signing the MOU with Bedrock. It was the only approved bidder, assigned by the court, and we had to take every step necessary to foster ways for improvement with all stakeholders who are involved with this—because it will be conditional upon everyone's agreement, including the union, including the employees, including the pensioners, including the other stakeholders. That's exactly what we're doing to foster and facilitate this going forward.

I appreciate the question from the member and his advocacy as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll remind the minister that this is a US company. US Steel's ownership was nothing but a disaster for the people of this province. Promise after promise was broken and not enforced by the federal government. Employment declined, facilities were idled, and eventually retirement benefits and municipal property taxes were suspended.

It is critical that workers and pensioners have seats at this table and are involved in every aspect of negotiations. They cannot be left in the dark, only getting partial information. People need some hope in Hamilton and Nanticoke. In light of yesterday's news, the local steelworkers and my local union have asked for a meeting with the Minister of Finance to inform him of some of the negative parts of this.

Will the minister commit to this meeting with the steelworkers of Hamilton as soon as possible to ensure that the workers and pensioners are fully informed about the recent developments?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have actually been meeting and dealing with the members from the union. We recognize how important it is to protect the OPEBs, to protect the ongoing support, because it has been eliminated. If it wasn't for the government of Ontario providing those supports, ongoing, to continue with the urgent health care requirements, the claims that are coming forward for dental and other aspects—we need to be there and we have.

It is a very complex situation, and this is only a first step in trying to facilitate our way through it. So we will continue to advise and work with all stakeholders to ensure that we get the best deal possible for the benefit of our pensioners and our employees and the people of Hamilton and Lake Erie, because we know how important it is to our economy and to Ontario. The whole sector is at risk. We recognize that. We're doing everything we can to work together to try to ensure we protect the interests of Ontario and the people of Ontario and the workers at Hamilton and Lake Erie.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Over the past few months, I've heard

concerns from my constituents in Davenport about their electricity bills, concerns I've raised here in the House. So I was very pleased when, last Thursday, the minister introduced a new bill, the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act. The bill is part of a comprehensive package to reduce electricity rates for Ontario consumers.

This government has spent the last 10 years making much-needed investments in our electricity system to ensure that it's clean, safe and reliable. These efforts included completely eliminating dirty coal as a generating source from our system. This remains the single largest climate change initiative in North America, and today our electricity supply is 90% emissions-free. The minister has introduced legislation as part of a package to build on these efforts by increasing affordability of electricity for all Ontarians.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please tell this House what the impact of these renewed efforts will be for people across the province and my constituents in Davenport?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the member for that question and for her tireless work for the people in her riding of Davenport.

There are three elements to our plan to increase affordability for Ontarians, and the first is to permanently rebate the provincial portion of the HST off the bills of five million families, farms and small businesses right across the province. The average savings from this rebate will be about \$130 per year.

The second is to increase support to the most rural customers in order to help with higher distribution costs in these areas. Together with the first rebate, this will represent about \$540 per year in savings for these families.

The third is to expand access for industrial customers to the industrial conservation incentive. Over 1,000 Ontario businesses will be newly eligible for this program, which can reduce their bills by as much as one third.

We're making sure that our system is clean, reliable and affordable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for those answers. I know that these programs will be a significant step for the families and businesses in Davenport and across Ontario.

I understand that the measures the ministry is proposing will be in addition to existing efforts and programs to reduce costs for electricity bills. This government has taken considerable action to reduce costs at the system level, including renegotiating the Green Energy Investment Agreement, saving \$3.7 billion, and deferring the construction of new nuclear reactors at Darlington, saving \$15 billion. Just as important as these system-wide efforts are the targeted programs our government will offer families like those who live in Davenport.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Would you inform the House on what pre-existing programs the ministry offers to all Ontario families for their electricity bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's important to mention that on top of what we're doing from the throne speech, we're actually moving forward on a number of our initiatives that we've designed and had in place to help Ontario families with their bills.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program, introduced this year, provides targeted support to low-income households. More than 135,000 Ontarians are already receiving this benefit.

1110

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, introduced in 2011, is another program designed to help those who need it most. It provides one-time grants of emergency assistance to customers temporarily unable to make ends meet.

Yet another program, which I know is important to me and many northern MPPs, is the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. It provides assistance to low-to-moderate-income individuals and families living in northern Ontario. Qualifying families receive up to \$224 per year.

The goal of this government, the goal as the energy minister—I'm very proud to ensure we have affordable access for all—

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

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Gila Martow: To the Minister of Health: Sabrina Gryn is a Thornhill mother of four. Unfortunately, one of her sons requires medical equipment to stay alive, including an oxygen machine, feeding pump, oxygen monitor and suction device. Due to the need for all this equipment, along with Ontario's increased hydro rates, her electricity bills have skyrocketed.

Mr. Speaker, the Gryn family does not qualify for any assistance programs. Will the Minister of Health please explain his concerns—if any—on the effect of rising electricity costs for those who require medical equipment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to be able to rise to answer the question from the honourable member, specifically relating to the Ontario Electricity Support Program.

This program is specifically geared to individuals to provide more funding to individuals who have to plug in medical equipment. They can get up to \$75 a month to ensure that when they have medical equipment—we recognize that there are increased costs—they can utilize this.

I would encourage the member to tell that individual to contact their local utility to make sure that they can find out all of the programs that are out there. There's even the saveONenergy program. There are many, many programs—six of them, to be exact—that these families can apply for.

On top of that, starting January 1, we will make sure that we can get this legislation passed so they can get that

8% rebate. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because it's for families like this that we asked for unanimous consent, but unfortunately the opposition voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: As I said in my initial question, the family did not qualify for any assistance from the Ministry of Health, from PowerStream or from any government program.

We're seeing energy poverty in this province like never before. Families that are considered middle-class and therefore ineligible for these subsidies, such as Sabrina's, are often struggling to provide the basic necessities.

Mr. Speaker, due to these skyrocketing electricity rates as a result of this government's policies, Sabrina has been unable to buy new shoes for her two growing daughters. What advice does the health minister—and perhaps the Minister of Energy—have for the Gryn family?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I think it's important to recognize that we as a government have heard that there are some families that are having difficulty out there with their electricity bills and so that's why we acted. We acted with a three-point plan, Mr. Speaker. We put forward this rebate to ensure that they can see this on their bills directly every month. But unfortunately, as I keep saying over and over, they actually voted against unanimous consent to work on this quickly. We have 70 local utilities that we have to work with, and we want to ensure that these families get access as quickly as possible.

I once again encourage all MPPs to tell constituents who are having a hard time to utilize and work with their LDCs to make sure that they can get qualified for these programs and get that money right back in their pocket. We built a clean, reliable system that we all rely on and we're bringing it to the next level to make it as affordable as possible.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim.

Cette année l'Ontario célèbre le 30^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français.

Applaudissements.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oui, pour sûr, pour sûr. Merci.

Le commissaire aux services en français, dans son rapport du 1^{er} juin dernier, a proposé une refonte complète de la loi en y allant de 16 recommandations. Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement n'a toujours pas agi sur les recommandations du commissaire qui semblent avoir été mises à l'écart—je dirais même aux oubliettes.

Il est temps de passer à l'action. À quand la refonte de la Loi sur les services en français?

L'hon. Deborah Matthews: À la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Premièrement, j'aimerais souhaiter une bonne journée des Franco-

Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, qui va être dimanche, et je sais qu'on va célébrer demain à Queen's Park la levée du drapeau.

Monsieur le Président, j'apprécie la question de la députée de Nickel Belt. Je suis fière des accomplissements que le gouvernement a faits de par ses réalisations. Il y a 30 ans, la loi a été mise en vigueur. Par la suite, en 2007, nous avons créé un commissaire. En 2013, on lui a donné une indépendance. On a beaucoup à offrir.

J'ai lu les recommandations du commissaire, et on est en train de les étudier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il n'y a pas seulement la refonte de la Loi sur les services en français qui traîne, monsieur le Président; il y a la mise en place d'un conseil des gouverneurs pour l'université franco. On est ici depuis 400 ans. On gère un réseau de 450 écoles, 12 conseils scolaires et deux collèges communautaires. La communauté franco-ontarienne est prête à prendre en main le conseil des gouverneurs de notre université franco.

Il est temps de passer à l'action. C'est pour quand l'université franco?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Encore une fois, je veux remercier la députée de Nickel Belt pour son travail sur ce dossier. Mais je veux vraiment réaffirmer et réitérer l'engagement du gouvernement, notre engagement—de la ministre Matthews et moi—sur ce dossier. Nous sommes en train de mettre en place un conseil de planification, et il va y avoir des nouvelles très bientôt.

Donc, merci beaucoup, et encore une fois, une belle fête aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes de l'Ontario.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Labour. There are many ways for my constituents to find out about their rights under the Employment Standards Act and the Ontario health and safety acts. I often direct community members to the online resources if they need specific assistance with an issue.

I know that another tool that the Ministry of Labour uses to inform Ontarians of their rights under these acts is through proactive blitzes. Last session in the House, the minister mentioned that over the summer, his ministry would be taking part in several blitzes across the province.

I'm very interested in knowing how the young worker blitz and the temporary foreign worker blitz ended. These workers are among the most vulnerable in our province, and I think it is important that we continue to ensure that they are protected and well informed of their rights.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Is there an update on the summer blitz results that could be shared with the House?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for that wonderful question, because it really speaks to what we believe in the province of Ontario, which is that workers have the right to be treated fairly

by their employers. They deserve to be paid for the work they do, they deserve pregnancy and personal emergency leaves, and they need to be paid the minimum wage. One of the best ways of doing that is that you focus on the areas where you think you have the most concern. You go into the workplaces; you conduct blitzes.

Over the summer, we did two blitzes. One focused on young workers and the other focused on temporary foreign workers. The goal of these blitzes was to educate employers and bring them into compliance.

We did 343 inspections over the summer. A significant number of employers we met benefited from the visits. Before our inspectors left—and this is something we should all be proud of—98% to 100% of those employers were in compliance already.

Mr. Speaker, the blitzes are working. We recovered \$300,000 for young workers in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I want to thank the minister for that answer.

The minister mentions an important point. Sometimes employers and employees are unaware that they are either not following the law or that they aren't getting what they are entitled to.

The Ministry of Labour website is a great resource, but blitzes are proactive. Having officers out across the province, visiting businesses and educating them, makes a big difference, as the minister mentioned. The voluntary compliance rates show that employers want to be doing the right thing, but I know that there is still work to be done. We need to make sure that all workers, including the most vulnerable, are protected and educated on their rights and entitlements.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What can Ontarians expect in terms of proactive inspections and blitzes over the coming months?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again for the question. Speaker, never in the history of Ontario has a government proactively inspected workplaces. We're the very first government to do that, and I'll tell you it's working.

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But we don't just do that. We also make 3,500 ordinary employment standards inspections. We want to make sure that people are following the law, that they understand the law. But we're also focusing on those people who sometimes think that they operate outside of the law, Speaker, that the law doesn't apply to them—the repeat violators. We're sending a zero-tolerance message that employees in this province deserve to be treated properly.

In addition to that, we're going to focus on some other areas. We're going to be doing blitzes in child care centres. We're doing a manufacturing blitz. We're doing tow truck blitzes, a small-manufacturing blitz, and fitness centre blitzes.

We're doing everything we possibly can to make sure employers know what their obligations are, and to educate employees so that they know what their rights are.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. A year ago today, everyone in this chamber was shocked and saddened by the news of the deaths of three women in and around my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton were brutally murdered, allegedly by a man who had been released on parole.

I spoke to the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who agreed with me that we had to do much more to protect women from an abuser, once that person had been released. He also assured me that action would be taken.

I and the people of my riding have waited a year for that action. We have run out of patience.

Can the minister inform the House, victims of violence, and all the people of Ontario when your government will take this matter seriously and do what is necessary to protect women from being re-victimized by their abuser?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I thank the member for the question. First of all, let me begin by saying my thoughts are with the victims' families and friends, and the Wilno and surrounding communities on the one-year anniversary of this truly devastating event.

My most important priority is the safety and security of every Ontarian. As the member knows, we're now investing \$208 million each year for services that support and protect women from violence. We've enhanced the tracking of offenders by improving the way domestic violence probation orders are uploaded to police information centres. Under the Proceeds of Crime Front Line Policing Grant, we've invested \$1.2 million in related domestic violence initiatives.

In fact, this past Tuesday, we announced \$58,000 in the member's riding, through the OPP Renfrew detachment, to support the Renfrew County Situational Hub project. The project aims to bring together partnered agencies from the justice, mental health and social services sectors to support and help protect individuals from violence in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: While those supports are appreciated, my requests have been very specific. Because I couldn't wait for your government to act, within weeks of those murders I introduced my private member's bill which would have required all parolees to sign and accept the terms of their release. Those who were convicted of domestic or sexual violence and who were deemed a risk to their victims would also be subject to electronic monitoring.

My bill received all-party support on second reading. As a result of prorogation, it has died on the order paper. I will be reintroducing my bill to help victims of violence this afternoon.

My preference would be for the government to introduce its own legislation. In the absence of this, will you

support my bill so that the victims of violence will have more protection than they currently have, and send a clear message that this Legislature places the highest priority on protecting victims of domestic or sexual violence?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Again to the member, I'm certainly aware of the member's private member's bill. It was Bill 130 that did die on the order paper. But I want to say to the member that I'm certainly willing to work with him, and I want to commend his advocacy on this particular issue and his efforts to champion this particular issue.

What I will say as well, Speaker, is that probation orders are enforceable whether or not they're signed by the offender. In addition, we have policies in place for the supervision of high-risk offenders, including electronic supervision, when imposed by the courts or the parole board.

We've implemented additional training for officers, with a specific focus on domestic violence and sex offender supervision. We've also focused offender programs and resources on medium- and high-risk offenders and continue to do that.

I want to say to the member today that I am committed to working with the member in relation to the specific elements of his private member's bill so that we can continue to improve these circumstances and protect women from domestic violence.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Back in June, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services announced that nine ServiceOntario offices across the province were under consideration for possible closure, including the Blind River office, which is in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. The decision was put on hold, pending further review. However, to date, we have yet to receive any updates from your ministry as to the result of these reassessments.

These offices are vital and provide an excellent service to which all Ontarians deserve equal access. Can you please provide us with what progress is being made as far as the re-evaluations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank the member for his question.

While at AMO, I did meet with several municipalities on that particular subject.

I have to say that our government is extremely proud of the consumer services that our ServiceOntario locations provide to Ontarians, including access to a wide range of services, such as driver and vehicle registration, land registration, issuance of health cards and birth certificates.

Yes indeed, recently there was an announcement, but there was also an announcement that we would be

reviewing our decision. This was also part of my decision to meet with people at AMO.

At this point, I want to reassure that we are reviewing the decision. I hope to have some answers shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: We have seen the government overturn its decisions in the past in a veiled attempt to provide short-term satisfaction—hence your June press release advising my office and the public, indicating, “Blind River may not end up being one of the offices closed,” the emphasis on “may not.”

A ServiceOntario office is important to smaller communities. Public services are being cut and squeezed across Ontario. People are really disappointed. They didn’t vote for these office closures or the threat of having these offices closed, either. Now they don’t know what to expect from this government.

What assurances can your ministry offer that these closures won’t be reintroduced today or at a later date?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Again I say thank you to the member for raising it, and I understand how important those offices are as part of our access to government services. We are reviewing. That’s why we are looking and that’s why we shared that decision with the member, to let him know about the decision that we would be reviewing some.

As part of the transformation, we are also looking at transformation of services. People in Ontario are using other means, such as online, technology which has been improving. But at the same time, I want to reiterate our commitment to provide the best access to government services as part of my commitment as the minister.

I thank the member for his question, and we’re definitely following up.

SUBVENTIONS POUR LES ARTS ET LA CULTURE

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

M. John Fraser: Ma question est pour la ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport. Vendredi dernier, la ministre et la première ministre étaient dans la capitale de notre nation pour lancer Ontario150. Ontario150 comprendra une série de célébrations qui auront lieu tout au long de 2017 et qui célébreront le 150^e anniversaire de l’Ontario, honorant notre passé tout en favorisant l’essor de nos communautés pour l’avenir.

Mr. Speaker, 2017 is a significant milestone that will provide us with a unique opportunity to build pride and optimism in our province, inspire our youth, and create strong economic, social and cultural legacies for all Ontarians.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House more about the exciting plans that were unveiled last week in Ottawa, and how our government plans to support Ontario communities in celebrating Ontario150?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South, in particular for his advocacy on the Ottawa 2017 celebrations.

It was my pleasure to join him, as well as the rest of the dedicated Ottawa caucus, our Premier, Mayor Jim Watson and community leaders to launch Ontario150. I’m so excited about the energy we saw at the announcement, Speaker, and look forward to building on this optimism as we reach out to communities across Ontario.

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As part of this commitment, we’ve launched a series of grant programs. They include our community capital program, \$25 million to renovate, repair and retrofit existing community and cultural infrastructure; our partnership program, \$5 million to support new partnerships and collaborations with youth and about youth, and to empower them; and finally, \$7 million in community celebration funding. I have every expectation that these programs will engage our youth and celebrate our shared identity and our legacy.

I look forward to providing more information in the supplementary, Speaker.

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

M. John Fraser: Merci à la ministre. Je voudrais faire l’écho des commentaires de la ministre au sujet du succès de l’évènement de lancement de la semaine dernière. Nous avons hâte de célébrer Ontario150 dans ma communauté d’Ottawa. Ontario150 stimulera la fierté communautaire et de construire une connexion plus profonde à notre province.

Ontario150 will also lay the groundwork for the next 150 years, so we want all Ontarians to start thinking about what this milestone means to them. I appreciate the impact of the granting programs the minister has referred to. I know they will have a province-wide impact in bringing Ontarians together and supporting our communities.

The minister also announced that there will be additional initiatives across Ontario in the year ahead. Can the minister please inform this House about what we can expect in the coming year?

L’hon. Eleanor McMahon: Encore une fois, un gros merci au député d’Ottawa South.

I’m grateful for this opportunity to share the highlights of Ontario150 with all Ontarians and with this House. They include a new logo, an updated version of our unofficial anthem, A Place to Stand, celebrations in our nation’s capital and in communities across Ontario, and customized programming at many of our agencies and attractions.

In addition, as part of Ontario150, Toronto will host the 2017 Invictus Games, an international sporting event for wounded soldiers. We’re very proud of that, Speaker. These games will really demonstrate the transformative power of sport.

We look forward to sharing more in the coming months on what Ontarians can expect in 2017: key investments and initiatives which will showcase Ontario to the world, enhance tourism and welcome citizens from the across our globe.

I look forward to working with our federal and community partners, Speaker. Thank you for this—

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

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Deputy Premier: The Ministry of Transportation has been consistently among the top criticized agencies in the Ontario government, and for good reason. Ontarians of all ages are inconvenienced at almost every interaction with the ministry with lost files and needless delays.

Medical reviews are a glaring example. When a doctor reports a driver as potentially unsafe, they will suspend the licence immediately. When a doctor says the driver is okay, however, the ministry reserves the right to sit on the file for 30 business days.

Hard-working Ontarians' jobs and livelihoods are at risk. How can the government justify such an insensitive and bureaucratic policy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question and for his initiative with his private member's bill. That's an issue that we've all dealt with in our constituency offices. It's a common issue that we face.

The provincial government, as you know, the Ministry of Transportation, puts a very, very high priority on public safety, and they put a very, very high priority on responding particularly to the senior citizens who have had to deal with these medical issues. We are currently meeting or exceeding our 30-day customer service standards, processing 90% of cases within 10 days. So far in 2016, we are meeting our customer service standards 99.5% of the time. That's a very, very strong response to that particular concern that seniors may have.

Our government's mandatory reporting for physicians and optometrists is an important way we are working to continue to make driving safe for individuals using Ontario roads.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Back to the Deputy Premier: Constituents come to my office begging for help because they are about to lose their jobs due to this unjustifiable six-week delay. They have families to feed and bills to pay. People in my region rely on driving to access health care, work and basic living necessities.

Providing service means being accountable, transparent and effective. It takes an hour to enforce a physician's advice to suspend a licence. Why should it take 30 days to take his advice to reinstate it?

Will the government support my motion this afternoon calling for a five-business-days service guarantee for the reinstatement of a driver's licence following a positive medical review?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, I want to thank the member for his interest in this particular issue. It's of

interest to all of us. We deal with it in our constituency offices every week, every month.

On June 2, 2015, our government passed Bill 31, which is making Ontario's roads even safer by expanding medical reporting requirements, clarifying mandatory and discretionary reporting requirements in future regulations and setting out what specific driver information must be provided by mandatory reporting forms.

Through mandatory medical reporting, the Ministry of Transportation applies consistent medical standards that are designed to balance road safety and mobility for Ontarians. These standards are based on basic medical standards under the Highway Traffic Act and detailed national medical standards established by the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, the CCMTA.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. Transit riders hoped the throne speech would have a plan to improve transit service and lower fares. They were let down. Not only is Presto expensive, there is a cost just to buy an empty card. This makes it extremely difficult for social service agencies to give out transit passes, especially as tokens and tickets are phased out.

The city of Ottawa, in fact, is threatening to take the province to court because Presto is using its government-enforced monopoly to demand higher commissions from Ottawa transit riders. Ottawa riders currently pay 2% of their fare to Presto. Presto wants 10%. This outrageous cash grab will drive up fares, reduce transit ridership and harm low-income people.

Why is the government making low-income people pay for the government's decision to force this costly fare-payment system on to Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I understand that the TTC is working closely with Presto on implementation across the entire TTC system. This includes making single fares available to users and developing a system that works best for those commuting in Toronto. While the TTC and Presto work to iron out the details of this rollout, specific questions on this issue should be directed to the TTC.

The TTC is managing the system. The TTC and the city of Toronto are working with the province to iron out the issues around Presto. The responsibility for operations and the responsibility for service rests with the TTC.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Davenport on a point of order.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order: I just couldn't let today pass by without recognizing the special day it is for a very special person here on this side of the House, our very own MPP Arthur Potts from Beaches–East York. It's his birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy birthday.

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

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STEELWAY BUILDING SYSTEMS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I had the opportunity last week to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Steelway Building Systems in Aylmer. Steelway is a family-owned business created by the late Glen White and his wife, Pat. Today their sons, Jason and Bryan, run the company.

Steelway employs 200 people in their Aylmer facility and to date has built over 4,400 buildings throughout Ontario. The company's success comes from the fact that Steelway operates on the same core values that Glen instilled in his business: a commitment to employees and a culture built around integrity, family and community.

The company has truly embraced the community. In addition to supporting the United Way, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the East Elgin Community Complex and East Elgin Secondary School, Steelway has been a firm supporter of the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. Year after year, the business contributes to the hospital in numerous ways, from buying colonoscopes and patient care equipment to assisting with the current expansion of the hospital.

The employees at Steelway also contribute to our community, donating to St. Thomas-Elgin Christmas Care, St. Thomas Caring Cupboard and the Aylmer Corner Cupboard Food Bank.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the work and support delivered to our community by Jason, Bryan and all the employees at Steelway.

Just give me a few seconds. I just want to quote something from the corporate book: "It all started with the heritage of private entrepreneurship, community involvement and their father Glen White's lifelong passion for building things."

They continue this story to this day, and we wish them all the best.

HYDRO RATES

Miss Monique Taylor: I rise today on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain, who have yet to be given any substantial relief for their rising energy costs by this Liberal government.

With the catastrophic and reckless sale of Hydro One looming, I think most Ontarians are wondering just who this Liberal government stands for. Certainly they are not concerned with the families that have been calling my constituency office in desperate need of help.

In my riding, one family with a child who has a complex medical condition requires life-saving energy use. They need use of an oxygen tank, a feeding pump,

constant use of air conditioning for a respiratory condition, and many, many other medical supports that use excessive amounts of energy.

Over the past two months, this family's hydro bill has doubled, to over \$1,100. Thanks to the work of my constituency staff, last week this family found a bit of relief from our local utility company, but this does absolutely nothing to get them back the thousands of dollars that they have spent on life-saving energy expenditures and the emotional and financial strain that they have experienced. And it does nothing to save them from the inevitable rising costs of hydro that they have yet to face.

This Liberal government needs to start caring about the challenges that Ontario families are facing today and stop the sale of Hydro One.

CANADIAN ARCTIC

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, thank you very much earlier for acknowledging my birthday—I saw you mutter under your breath. It's my birthday.

I want to talk a little bit about something not community-related but related more to me individually. I had a chance this summer to do something extraordinary as a Canadian. I'm very proud to be an Ontarian and living in this incredible country. I took an opportunity to go to the Arctic with my 28-year-old daughter. We flew into Greenland, took a beautiful boat—the Ocean Endeavour—down the longest fjord in the world, up the coast of Greenland, stopping in at some small Greenland communities, meeting with the native people and looking at what they do and how they survive there, then across the Davis Strait, north of Baffin Island, up near Ellesmere Island. It was the most extraordinary trip.

On board the boat, organized by a group called Adventure Canada, there were at least a dozen scientists—biologists, marine biologists, botanists and archaeologists—and historians, and we got lessons almost every single day. We got to look at where we were and what we saw. What we saw was stupendous. We saw icebergs like you've never imagined. We had, in a big boat, to manoeuvre our way around these huge sheets of ice, because never before had they ever seen this many ice floes in this area, breaking off the face of glaciers in the north. It was absolutely extraordinary.

I met an explorer named Jerry Kobalenko, who has personally sledged over 20,000 miles across the Arctic over the last 20 years, a modern-day explorer. We got to the top of the mountain where Franklin last put a marker, and that was—what?—three weeks before they discovered the Terror.

This is an adventure. I encourage every one of you to go and see the Arctic, if you get a chance. It's an extraordinary place. It will make you proud to be a Canadian.

JOHN CAIRNS

Mr. Todd Smith: Earlier this summer, a resident of Prince Edward-Hastings and a very good friend of mine climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.

Mr. Speaker, let me put this into a bit of context for you. On November 30, 1992, almost 24 years ago, John Cairns was assembling a freight train at a rail yard here in Toronto. It was a typical day on the job, much like today, a big blue sky day. That was until a 68-tonne railway car backed over top of him. He lost his right arm, he lost his right leg, and he spent a week or more on life support.

He'll tell you that he should have died that day, but he didn't. He'll tell you there were many days during his rehabilitation that he wished he had died, but he didn't. And now the local motivational speaker and philanthropist is focused on inspiring others to the fullest, something he's been doing for years in the Quinte region, across the province, across the country and now around the world.

Last September, John swam across the Bay of Quinte, which is a pretty solid feat for a guy who's a double amputee. This spring, he danced in the Dancing with the Stars Quinte competition, finishing second; his partner, Lisa Vance, was a big part of that. But this past summer, he continued to defy the odds, climbing the tallest mountain in Africa.

Following the Kilimanjaro climb, he said he wanted to give up on the first day. He said, "I reached numerous extremes of sheer exhaustion, pushed to physical, mental and psychological human boundaries that resembled a place when I was fighting for my life 23 years ago."

He's also caught the attention of Canada's Walk of Fame. Cairns is going to be receiving the 2016 Peter Soumalias philanthropic unsung hero award at the Walk of Fame ceremonies next month.

Congratulations, John Cairns, for all your accomplishments and thank you for being such a tremendous inspiration to all of us.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The other day, a doctor from Japan, Masanori Hanada, gave a media conference here at Queen's Park along with Chief Simon Fobister of the Grassy Narrows band. Dr. Hanada reported that in the recent research he'd done at Grassy Narrows First Nation and at Wabaseemoong First Nation, 90% of the people were contaminated with mercury; they showed signs of mercury poisoning.

He noted that young people, people who had not been born when mercury was dumped in the English-Wabigoon river system, were showing signs of mercury poisoning. That alone is shameful enough, but earlier this year, this government said it was allocating \$300,000 to do immediate work on assessment to pave the way for remediation.

My colleague France Gélinas from Nickel Belt asked the minister of indigenous affairs the other day about how much had been spent—not a single word from that minister about what has been spent. I have heard rumours that almost nothing has been spent; that a year of research has been lost. The government, which talked so much about reconciliation and respect for First Nations, won't even answer a question as to what they've spent of

money they committed for immediate action. That is shameful.

AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Canada has been blessed with the contributions of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community as our friends, neighbours and co-workers for 50 years. This week, the members of the Ahmadiyya community celebrated 50 years of building our families, communities and country at Mississauga city hall.

For many of those 50 years, I've been fortunate to call members of the community my personal friends. The Ahmadiyya community is based in Pakistan, where its members often have a difficult time with discrimination against them.

I was honoured to be the master of ceremonies at the anniversary celebration at Mississauga city hall and to try a few sentences of my best Urdu. Ahmadiyya national president, Mr. Lal Khan Malik, spoke to the gathering of about 300 people, followed by the head of the Mississauga Jama'at, Mr. Syed Ahsan Gardezi. We were joined by Mississauga mayor Bonnie Crombie and most of the Mississauga city council. O Canada was sung by a group of children recently arrived from Syria.

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A representative of the newly arrived Syrian community spoke for a few minutes in Arabic about his community's challenges, about their gratitude to Canadians and about their gratitude to their Ahmadiyya Muslim sponsors. It was a celebration of what makes Canada unique in this world, and I was proud to be a part of it.

ERNIE SPILLER AND SEAN ADAMS

Mr. Jim McDonell: The residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry have built welcoming, generous, caring communities throughout their lifetimes. Recently, this spirit was recognized with the awarding of the prestigious Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to two remarkable people in my riding, Ernie Spiller and Sean Adams.

Ernie, a Second World War veteran, has been a tireless advocate for preserving local historical sites, as well as being a keen member of community organizations such as the horticultural society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Glengarry Fencibles. At 92, his volunteer activities show no sign of slowing down. He is an inspiration to our community and a driven achiever. His latest project is the Sir John Johnson Manor House restoration project, a precious national historical site in Williamstown.

Sean Adams is a familiar name and face to Cornwall and the residents of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. He is a dedicated, tireless supporter of key local institutions such as the children's treatment centre, the United Way of SD&G, our local hospital and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Sean's dedicated hard work has been tirelessly aimed at preserving and improving our ability to be healthy and happy.

On behalf of the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I want to thank Ernie and Sean for their dedication to our people and to our communities. These gentlemen exemplify the community spirit that exemplifies my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and are an inspiration to all.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. John Vanthof: This week, members of the Legislature had a great opportunity to go to the IPM in Minto, and I'd like to once again congratulate the volunteers who put that show on. It was a great show. I know how much it takes. It takes about three to four years to put on something like that. We're only there for a few hours. That's why I'd like to invite the people of Ontario, and certainly I hope the members reserve the third week of September in 2019 when the plowing match will be in West Nipissing. That's in my riding. I think we should take a couple more days. We should maybe take the whole week off to go there, because there you will also get the Franco-Ontarians. It's great to talk about because they have a very heavy Franco-Ontarian influence. I'm sure you're going to enjoy yourselves.

I was talking to some of the reps at the plowing match in Minto, and they're well along the way for organizing. I like to give people directions when I tell them to go to northern Ontario, so to get to the plowing match in West Nipissing, you have two ways. When you go to Barrie, you can go up 11 and turn left at North Bay, or you can go up the 400 and turn right on Highway 64. Either way, you will get there.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleague Mike Mantha because this year we camped out at the plowing match—actually, Mike worked; I camped—but it was Mike's RV, and I'd really like to thank him. That's the only way to truly enjoy the work people put into a plowing match.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai le plaisir maintenant de vous informer de quelques développements dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord.

I have the privilege and pleasure of sharing with you and the chamber some of the remarkable developments that are going on in my own riding of Etobicoke North. First of all, I'd like to salute both current and past Ministers of Transportation and Infrastructure Ontario. As you will know, there is a multi-billion-dollar project under way, as we speak, to build the light rail transport trains on the Finch line, the Finch LRT. I estimate that probably \$1.2 billion of that is actually coming directly to my own riding.

I have to share with you, Speaker—I'm not going to show you the maps because I know we're not allowed to use props—it's a magnificent transformation, modernization, uplift and upgrade to my riding and to the transportation hub. For example, the Finch LRT will

actually have eight stops—count it, eight—within my own riding, starting from Humber College for our students, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion Road, Stevenson, Kipling, Islington and, just at the border, at Weston Road. This promises to not only, as I say, modernize our transportation but it's an extraordinary boost to my riding and to the people for their transport and, ultimately, for their prosperity.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (PAROLE), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS (LIBÉRATIONS CONDITIONNELLES)

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne les libérations conditionnelles.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill provides that an inmate granted parole has to sign their certificate of parole or they will not be released. Currently, the Ontario Parole Board is allowed to release an inmate even if the inmate does not sign their certificate of parole if, in the opinion of the board, compelling or exceptional circumstances exist.

The bill also provides that if an inmate who committed sexual or domestic violence is released on parole, their location must be electronically monitored unless they do not pose a safety risk to their victim.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT (PURCHASE AND SALE REQUIREMENTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE (EXIGENCES RELATIVES À L'ACHAT ET À LA VENTE DES BILLETS)

Ms. Kiwala moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act to prohibit the use of ticket purchasing software and to require the listing of a ticket's original purchase price / *Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle pour interdire l'utilisation de logiciels de billetterie et exiger l'indication du prix d'achat d'origine des billets.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Today it is my pleasure to introduce the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act (Purchase and Sale Requirements), 2016, which will, if passed, prohibit the use of certain ticket-purchasing software and will require secondary sellers to list the original purchase price of a ticket when it is offered for resale in a print or electronic format.

It has become increasingly common to use software to bypass security measures which are intended to limit the number of tickets a person can purchase at one time. As a result, mass quantities of tickets are being purchased and sold at inflated prices by some ticket resellers through bypass security software, commonly known as scalper bots. This means that cultural and entertainment opportunities are not accessible to all Ontarians.

This act, if passed, will ensure fair and transparent ticket sales to increase the accessibility of sporting events, museum exhibits, festivals, concerts, theatre productions and much more to all Ontarians.

Speaker, I'm confident that all members can stand behind this proposed legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm assuming that that was from the explanatory note.

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PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the legislative Ontario 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've affixed my name to the petition as well.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

Two years later, I agree with this petition, agree with it wholeheartedly, and present it to page Matthew to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

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

"Whereas beginning August 31, 2017, an exclusionary clause in ON Reg. 63/09 will prohibit a professional pest adviser from completing a pest assessment if they receive an income from a manufacturer or retailer of a class 12 pesticide; and

"Whereas Ontario currently has" on record "538 certified crop advisers" as well as 30 professional agrologists "providing services to Ontario farmers; and

"Whereas the implementation of this regulation will significantly reduce the number of certified crop advisers capable and willing to conduct pest assessments in the province to approximately 80; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only jurisdiction within North America to adopt this exclusionary clause; and

“Whereas this regulation will impact farmers by forcing an end to the effective professional partnerships they have established with experts who understand their unique crop needs, soil types and field conditions;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to support measures that will remove the exclusionary clause and ensure farmers can continue to work with the professionals they have built a relationship with, and who are familiar with their land and crop needs.”

I totally agree with this petition, and I’ll affix my signature and send to the desk with Paul.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are affected by the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are unprotected by current minimum standards outlined in employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

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

“Implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour.”

I agree, Speaker. I’ll put my name to it and give it to Simone to bring it up to the front.

HIGHWAY RAMPS

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Whereas the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury will continue to have robust growth of population and commercial activity in proximity to the Holland Marsh, Ontario’s salad bowl, which consists of 7,000 acres of specialty crop area lands designated in the provincial Greenbelt Plan and is situated along the municipal boundary between King township and the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, as bisected by Highway 400;

“Whereas the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400 provide critical access for farm operations within the Holland Marsh allowing for efficient transport of product to market, delivery of materials and equipment and patronage of on-farm commercial activities; and

“Whereas the loss of that critical access to Highway 400 may threaten the significant financial benefits that the Holland Marsh contributes to the Ontario economy;

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

“That the council of the corporation of the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury hereby advises the Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, that the town does not support the elimination of the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400, and further, that the town

requests that the duration of the temporary closure of Canal Road between Wist Road and Davis Road be minimized to the greatest extent possible during the Highway 400/North Canal bridge replacement project.”

I’ve affixed my signature as I am in agreement, and given it to page Amy.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas our hydro rates have tripled since Conservative governments started privatizing our electricity system, and since Premier Wynne took office less than four years ago, peak hydro rates have increased by more than 50%—faster than the rise in family income and more than 10 times faster than inflation; and

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has reported that the number of residential customers’ hydro accounts in arrears skyrocketed between 2014 and 2015 from 2,172 to 6,078, representing \$1,180,762 in the city of Windsor; and

“Whereas the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has reported that it expects one in 20 businesses to close in the next five years due to rising energy costs; and

“Whereas the Minister of Energy has stated that he has no intention of requesting the OEB to lower or reassess the affordability of hydro rates in the province, claiming the OEB is an independent regulator with a mandate to protect the interests of Ontario; and

“Whereas the OEB and the Minister of Energy have failed in their mandate to protect the interests of Ontario consumers, preferring the interests of the energy suppliers, with policies that raise prices and exacerbate problems faced by families and businesses which are in energy poverty, or on the cusp of energy poverty; and

“Whereas the high incidence of energy poverty in Canada, particularly when gasoline expenditures are included, should be of central concern when policies regarding energy are devised; and

“Whereas the Minister of Energy has the power under the Ontario Energy Board Act to issue directives to the OEB with respect to fees and pricing, including the power to compel the OEB to take steps specified in the directives to promote fairness, efficiency and transparency in the retail market for gas and electricity;

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

“To take immediate and tangible steps to reduce the cost of energy paid by Ontarians, including:

“(a) using the minister’s authority under the Ontario Energy Board Act to issue directives to the OEB to ensure fair and reasonable energy costs are being paid, including the need to take into account low-income needs and other factors driving people and small businesses into energy poverty, and

“(b) stopping the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families and not private business benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I agree with this 100%. I will sign my name and send it to the table with page Matthew.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many residents and businesses in Ontario rely on the ability to drive a vehicle in order to work, buy food and otherwise function;

“Whereas licence suspension upon receipt of a medical notice to that effect is immediate; and

“Whereas constituents are forced to wait 30 business days following a positive medical review by their physician prior to being reinstated; and

“Whereas this wait time is not prescribed in any legislation or regulation, but is solely due to Ministry of Transportation policies that ignore the reality of living and operating a business, especially in rural and northern Ontario; and

“Whereas a needlessly long licence suspension threatens the livelihoods of many families in Ontario;

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

“To direct the Ministry of Transportation to institute a five-business-day service guarantee for drivers’ licence reinstatements following the submission of a positive physician’s review.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Om.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas since ... 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 ...” Ontarians need and deserve.

I agree with this petition and present it to page Makayla, who will bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This is another one of the 1,500 petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office;

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount;

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating;

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians’ electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians’ energy bills.”

I agree with this, will affix my name and hand it to page Adam.

PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M. Michael Mantha: « À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l’Ontario continuent d’être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l’essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d’essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l'essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d'écart de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d'essence annualisés inférieurs;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition. Je la présente à page Cameron pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

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

"Whereas beginning August 31, 2017, an exclusionary clause in ON Reg. 63/09 will prohibit a professional pest adviser from completing a pest assessment if they receive an income from a manufacturer or retailer of a class 12 pesticide; and

"Whereas Ontario currently has 538 certified crop advisers providing services to Ontario farmers; and

"Whereas the implementation of this regulation will significantly reduce the number of certified crop advisers capable and willing to conduct pest assessments in the province to approximately 80; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only jurisdiction within North America to adopt this exclusionary clause; and

"Whereas this regulation will impact farmers by forcing an end to the effective professional partnerships they have established with experts who understand their unique crop needs, soil types and field conditions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to support measures that will remove the exclusionary clause and ensure farmers can continue to work with the professionals they have built a relationship with, and who are familiar with their land and crop needs."

I'm happy to affix my signature in support and give it to page Gideon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time allocated for petitions has expired. Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HAZEL McCALLION DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE HAZEL McCALLION

Mrs. Mangat moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day /
Projet de loi 16, Loi proclamant le Jour de Hazel
McCallion.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a great privilege to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 16, the Hazel McCallion Day Act.

Before I discuss the bill's purposes and merits, I would like to say a few words for my reasons why I have decided to put forward this bill and to recognize the contributions of Ontario's most dynamic and longest-serving female mayor and, more importantly, what is needed for our society to be truly fair and just by investing in women as equal partners and more fully into leadership roles.

This bill reflects on an ever-evolving status of women and the important role they play in our society, their empowerment, and who, in my opinion, best represents the struggle a woman has to go through in life to be in a leadership role, and who, in my opinion, can best encourage the hopes, aspirations and dreams of young girls and women to succeed and achieve limitless success in all walks of life, be it in business, professions or public service.

Canada, for me, has always been a land of great opportunity for my family, for so many of the constituents of Mississauga-Brampton South, and for Ontarians of every background. It is a place where we can realize our dreams.

When I first arrived in Canada, I did not dream that one day I will have the privilege of standing in the Ontario Legislature and serving so many hard-working Ontarians.

Applause.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you.

Despite acquiring this humbling position, I have always been aware of two things: first, that I remain inspired by many everyday heroes in our communities, such as teachers, nurses, doctors, firemen, police officers, entrepreneurs and many more who, by their hard work and dedication, contribute enormously to our well-being, security and progress; second, that the privilege I enjoy being a member of this House may not be enjoyed by all other deserving women.

I say this because it is an unfortunate truth across Canada and around the world that, despite some advances, women often face challenges and barriers that are without justification. Those challenges and barriers for women include harassment, gender-based discrimination, violence, exploitation and deprivation in many forms.

The fact is, women represent more than one half of our population, but they are unjustifiably under-represented in leadership roles in business, professions and public life. Bill 16 seeks to encourage a dialogue amongst women, girls and everyone else in our society about the challenges and barriers that women face for no reason other than their gender.

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We all know that female role models can motivate, inspire and encourage a healthy discussion as to how to overcome those challenges and barriers faced by women and girls going forward. With that idea in mind, and to further our society's dialogue about social justice and the equality of women, I thought long and hard about who might inspire my fellow Ontarians to ask questions about the role of women in society and about who could stand as an example of what women can achieve. Of many successful and inspiring women role models, one person, nonetheless, stands out strongest, and she is Hurricane Hazel.

Even in retirement, Hazel McCallion continues to serve her community with complete devotion and extraordinary energy, and at 95. In my humble opinion, Hazel McCallion is a true example of tenacity, courage, fighting spirit and sincerity. She earned and built that reputation over years of hard work and struggle to succeed in a man's world.

She demonstrated that tenacity and fighting spirit when she played professional hockey in Quebec; in business, where Hazel climbed the corporate ladder in Montreal and then in Toronto; and in public life, where she was elected deputy reeve of Streetsville in 1967, mayor of Streetsville in 1970 and mayor of the amalgamated city of Mississauga in 1978, followed by 11 election victories between 1980 and 2010—many times winning over 90% of the vote share. When she retired, officially she had served 36 years, the longest of any Mississauga mayor, and the very-longest-serving female mayor in Canadian history.

For all those and other achievements in her life, she also enjoyed a successful married life with her husband, Sam, and raised three children.

On their own, Hazel's accomplishments are laudable, but as of 2014, her retirement—that looks by most standards like a full-time job—makes her life of achievement and contribution to public life truly extraordinary.

Hazel McCallion rightfully took pride in managing an efficient municipal government, growing her community from a collection of small towns to Ontario's third-largest city, with almost 800,000 residents. During her tenure, Mississauga has attracted leading companies from around the globe, including over 50 Fortune 500 companies.

I have known her to lend her energy to great causes in the community, including charitable work, literacy, higher education, sports, arts and culture. She has encouraged young women to pursue sport as a member of the board for the Ontario women's hockey league. She helped to have the Hershey Centre built in Mississauga. She supported the establishment of the Mississauga campus of the University of Toronto and she is committed to supporting Sheridan College, which has two campuses in Peel region, one of which is named after her. She now is the first chancellor of Sheridan.

For her hard work, dedication and example, she has been awarded numerous honours at the local, national

and international levels. Just a few of these include professional association awards and having facilities named after her, such as the Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre at University of Toronto Mississauga, the Hazel McCallion Centre for Heart Health at Trillium Health Centre Mississauga, Hazel McCallion Senior Public School, and the Hazel McCallion Campus at Sheridan in Mississauga.

She has received an honorary doctorate from the University of Toronto, the Order of Canada, the Order of the Rising Sun from Japan, and the cross of the Order of Merit from Germany, and she is a Dame in the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Malta.

Madam Speaker, this amazing woman enjoys courage of conviction. She's not bound by ideological walls. She always takes a stand—what she believes to be the right thing to do and that is in the best interests of all concerned. I believe Hazel McCallion is a fitting example of what can be achieved irrespective of gender-based challenges and barriers if one works very hard, tenaciously and sincerely.

Today we not only have a cause to commit ourselves to, but we also have an amazing role model to follow. Ms. McCallion, thank you for giving so much of yourself to our community throughout your life and through your public life, offering such a fine example to women, and especially young and impressionable women. I'm very proud of you.

I urge all members of this House to support and vote in favour of this bill.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today. As I rise in the House, I would first like to take a moment to officially welcome Raymond Cho not only to our caucus but to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. This is my first opportunity to stand and do so, and I think, in the spirit in which the debate is happening right now, you would agree yourself that you wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the amazing women in your life who support you and help you every step of the way. So welcome, and congratulations on your win in Scarborough—Rouge River.

As I look at Madam Speaker sitting in her chair in this hallowed hall of the Ontario Legislature, I think it's safe to say that we are taking great strides and moving forward in terms of not only recognizing women's successes, but their ability to make a difference and to contribute in such a worthwhile way.

I have the honour of representing Ontario on the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians steering committee for Canada region. It is amazing to sit around a table with leaders from every province who are making a difference and inspiring women to get involved. I look forward to sharing that spirit next year when, in Ontario, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of women actually earning the right to vote and how far we've come.

I congratulate the member from Mississauga—Brampton South for taking on this initiative because we

have to celebrate women who have made a difference and have led the way. I think we can all here in the House today think about the women who have inspired us, women who have not only jumped over hurdles to lead the way, but have kicked them out of the way for the rest of us to follow. To the ones I'm thinking of personally, and I'm sure to everyone else, we say a sincere thank you to all of you who have done that, and Hazel McCallion is just one of those many people.

I've been taken by the comments that have been shared by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, and I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize two women who opened up the doors a little wider for all of us here today. They are Agnes Macphail and also Margarett Rae Luckock. They were elected in August 1943 as the first two women members of provincial Parliament in Ontario. They're revered and celebrated, but I must say, there's a special connection to Agnes, if you will, because she was born in Grey county, which the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound would celebrate if he was here. I know he will be; he's in his office listening to this right now.

The reality is that Agnes was a real champion. She had a respected voice, and I think that's really important as we look at what we're doing here today. We need to respect the women who can sit down at a table and bring quality discussion and dialogue to help resolve issues. Agnes Macphail was one of those special people. It has been said that while she taught in Bruce county, she would come and visit the village that I live outside of, Teeswater, and engage people and encourage people to stand up and share their voice in order to make a difference.

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I think Hazel McCallion is no different than Agnes Macphail or Margarett Rae Luckock in that regard, and I also think that what this particular day will serve to do is to definitely increase the awareness of how we can all make a difference.

Going back to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians steering committee: We hold an outreach program every year to increase awareness of the opportunities for women in Legislatures across this province. I was very pleased to be able to be part of a team last year at this time when we hosted a CWP outreach program here in Ontario. It's stunning, the number of women and young ladies who are eager to step forward, to make a difference, to become engaged.

It doesn't have to be at the level that we are celebrating Hazel at today. They can get involved in local community organizations. They can get engaged at the municipal level. They can become involved in provincial organizations, like we've seen so many do. If that encourages them or entices them to stretch farther, to make a difference—here within the Ontario Legislature, at the federal level or even back home at the municipal level—we need to celebrate that and encourage it.

It's very important to recognize that it wasn't always easy. Just 100 short years ago, women got the vote, as I said earlier, here in Ontario. We've come a long way.

I think this private member's bill will continue to push the benchmark and push the barometer by which we measure women's success further. I applaud her for that, and I look forward to encouraging Bill 16 later this afternoon.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's always an honour to be called upon in Ontario's provincial Parliament to speak on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh.

This private member's bill, introduced by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, would have us name the 14th of February as Hazel McCallion Day in Ontario. I guess I first heard Hazel's name when I was a reporter at CBC Windsor. There was a train derailment in Mississauga 37 years ago I guess it is now. It made the national news. Heck, it made the international news; I remember Walter Cronkite stumbling as he tried to pronounce "Mississauga."

That was quite a while ago now. Propane tanks burst, as did a tanker of deadly chlorine gas. Eventually, 200,000 people were evacuated from their homes. Mississauga was shut down for six days. Most people say it was a miracle that no one was killed. In fact, they still call it the Mississauga miracle, as opposed to the Mississauga disaster.

The first-term mayor of Mississauga at that time was Hazel McCallion. She would be re-elected another 11 or 12 times, sometimes by acclamation. She finally retired a couple of years ago at the age of 93. Speaker, Hazel is old enough to have been around the 11 times the Toronto Maple Leafs have won a Stanley Cup, and she says she fully intends to still be here when they win their 12th cup.

Other than that, who is Hazel McCallion? Well, Speaker, just so you know, she was born behind a wood-burning stove in a small town in rural Quebec on the Gaspé Peninsula on Valentine's Day in 1921. Hazel Mary Muriel Journeaux was the youngest of five children. She is a distant relative, by the way, through her maternal grandmother, of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. Of course, we all know him as the author of *In Flanders Fields*.

Her family ran a fish plant and owned a small store. When it came time to go to grade 10, she went to Montreal and lived in a boarding house with an older sister. In grade 11, she went to Quebec City and boarded at an Anglican nunnery. They ran an orphanage but took in boarders to help pay the bills. Let's just say she wasn't the best of students, but she worked hard, she kept quiet in class and at the end of the year she went back to Montreal and entered secretarial school, and there she excelled. She could do shorthand at 120 words a minute.

After graduating but before she started her first job, she took a trip back home to Gaspé to visit the family. One evening, while she was sitting on the front porch while her father smoked his pipe, a stranger came by—a stranger with a funny kind of accent—who was asking a

lot of questions about the area. A couple of days later, the same guy was arrested and charged with being a Nazi spy.

Hazel Journeaux then returned to Montreal to a secretary's job at a paper company, but she also joined a woman's professional hockey team. That was in the early 1940s, Speaker. She was paid \$5 a game. That was good money in those days, and it helped pay her dental bill when she had a couple of teeth knocked out. To this day, she tells me that those are the only teeth that aren't her own, the ones that were replaced; she says she still has her wisdom teeth.

When war broke out, Hazel got a job at Canadian Kellogg. You might think that's where she got her political snap, crackle and pop, but no, it wasn't that Kellogg company. This Kellogg was an engineering firm and it had military contracts, many of which were top secret, such as playing a role in the Manhattan Project, which led to the atom bomb.

Within her first few weeks, Kellogg was contracted to design and build the first synthetic rubber plant in Canada, and her job was to get it built on time and on budget. It also meant she had to move to Toronto to be closer to the Sarnia worksite. She was doing the hiring and the securing of the materials needed for the job. Before the end of the war, that plant was producing 90% of Canadian rubber. She was doing a man's job in a man's world.

Kellogg engineers put together plans for a plant that would have been the first in Canada to extract oil from the Alberta tar sands. And they built the Four Sisters coal-burning hydro generating station in Port Credit. I mention that because some 50 years later, as mayor, Hazel was the one who pushed the button that blew that plant up as Ontario started the process of getting out of coal-burning generating stations.

After 22 years at Kellogg, she left to help her husband, Sam, with his printing business in Streetsville. Her lasting gift from Kellogg was the \$85 a month in pension cheques that she has been receiving since 1986, when she turned 65.

Hazel met Sam when they were both members of the Anglican Young People's Association. She got to go to the Oslo conference in 1947, and that's where they passed resolutions urging Christians to run for elected office, help the poor and fight racial discrimination.

Her first letter to a Canadian Prime Minister was to Mackenzie King, asking him to look into the unjust internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.

In 1964, Hazel McCallion applied for and was appointed to the planning advisory committee—the planning board—in Streetsville. Two years later, she was named chair of the board.

She started her political career with a loss while trying to be the deputy reeve of Streetsville, but she won that position the following year. She was elected Streetsville's mayor in 1970, just in time to get into a bare-knuckled, no-holds-barred political fight with Premier

Bill Davis—Brampton Bill—over a forced regionalization of local government.

Streetsville became part of Mississauga. Hazel went on to become the councillor from that part of the larger community.

By 1978, she was a seasoned councillor and she decided she'd had enough of the old boys' network and their way of doing things, and she went after the top job: mayor of Mississauga. The slogan the incumbent mayor was using was, "A good mayor." The night before the election, Hazel and her team plastered stickers on her signs that said, "A better mayor." The rest was history. At the age of 57, Hazel McCallion was the new mayor of Mississauga.

She has never thought of herself as a feminist. She doesn't believe in a pink quota. She'll tell you that all you have to do to get ahead is "think like a man, act like a lady and work like a dog."

1400

Speaking of dogs, she loves them and has always had them, especially German shepherds. She called one of them after herself—no, not Hazel, but Hurricane, her first female shepherd.

That's right: "Hurricane Hazel" is a moniker that has stuck. There was a hurricane in Ontario named Hazel that blew through in 1954, but unlike that Hurricane Hazel, which blew through town and then left after causing millions of dollars in damages, this one stuck around and built things, created jobs and kept taxes down while building up financial reserves. Hazel McCallion was one of the first politicians in Canada to call for lot levies and development fees, saying, "Growth should pay for growth."

Still, even at 5 foot 2, this Hazel, according to former Premier David Peterson, was a terror to any Ontario Premier and the only person he was ever frightened of. I remember when I would go to AMO or FCM conferences and a speaker would see Hazel in the audience in the front row and he would say, "You know you're going to have a bad day when you show up at work at Queen's Park, open your door and see Hazel McCallion in there waiting for you."

I was at the FCM conference in Quebec City in 2008 when we gave Hazel a lifetime achievement award for promoting women in municipal politics. I was also there when we walked up to the National Assembly, and Quebec honoured Hazel as a native-born Quebecker who had accomplished so much in her political life.

I know she likes to quote former Ottawa mayor Charlotte Whitton, who was famous for saying, "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult."

When Hazel was 82, she was struck by a pickup truck while walking across the road in Streetsville. She was hospitalized, but she was out of the hospital and back to work before the truck got out of the repair shop.

Rick Mercer once did a profile on her, and it has attracted more than 3.4 million views on YouTube since

it was aired in 2009. She and Rick are out there playing hockey.

She's an avid stamp collector. She's on the board of regents at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association.

She's not perfect by any means. She didn't always get along with her Mississauga councillors—I mean, "Parrish" the thought. Besides "Hurricane Hazel," she's been stuck with other monikers such as "the Mississauga Rattler," "Attila the Hen" and "the Queen of Sprawl." But say what you will, the voters of Mississauga loved her.

Regrets? Yes, she's had a few. She didn't get enough time to spend money on public transit, she didn't get a convention centre and hotel built, she never went to university, and she never spent as much time as she wanted with Sam. He passed away from Alzheimer's in 1997.

I'm running out of time, but I do want to just say that Hazel is a big supporter of the arts and she thinks arts and culture are as important as sports and recreation if a community is to flourish. With that in mind, Speaker, I'll give you a little poem for Hazel:

Run against her—if you dare
 She's been hailed as Canada's most Popular Mayor.
 Politically—more red than blue
 Remember the ad—Stephen—Do I look scared to
 you?
 Never known to pull her punches or to coddle
 But—cherished by women—as a political role model.
 For that she deserves a medal, maybe even a
 medallion
 Because she's the one and only "Hurricane" Hazel
 McCallion.
 Born on Valentine's Day in 1921
 By the time debate on this motion is done...
 Stand back, let me say it in stereo...
 We'll have Hazel McCallion Day here in Ontario
 We'll have Hazel McCallion Day here in Ontario

Speaker, I've served with Hazel on the FCM board and the AMO board. She's a political rock star. She's well known and recognized across the province and across the country. She's one of a kind. "Sure, she's sometimes pugnacious, but she's no rapscallion... / She's Hazel—'Hurricane' Hazel—McCallion."

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on private member's bill number 16, An Act to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day. I want to commend my colleague, the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, for bringing forth this bill.

Earlier, we heard the speaker across speak of Margarete Rae Luckock, who was one of the first two women to be elected to the Ontario Legislature. Actually, she would have been the first woman to be elected. She and Agnes Macphail were actually the first women to be elected. Back in the day, when you got sworn in, it was

done in alphabetical order, but because Agnes Macphail had already served as the first woman elected to the House of Commons, it was actually Margarete Rae Luckock who was sworn in second. She gave up her first spot to be sworn in, to give that to Agnes.

I mention Margarete Rae Luckock because back when she got elected, she represented an area that is currently part of my riding of Davenport, so I'm very proud of her. As the first female MPP elected for Davenport with the current boundaries, here in this Legislature, I cannot be more honoured and proud to support the member's motion, which proposes to proclaim February 14 each year as Hazel McCallion Day in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as you know, our province strives to eliminate gender-based discrimination and to eliminate the many barriers that women in this province still encounter.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again recognize you as the first Chinese female Speaker in Ontario.

Former mayor McCallion's professional life and numerous contributions are reflective of the leadership role that women can and should be entitled to seek in a fair and just society. I am proud and honoured to recognize the contributions of former mayor Hazel McCallion, who helped shape the history of Mississauga and all of Ontario.

Mayor Hazel McCallion deserves to be recognized for her tremendous contribution to the city of Mississauga, the province of Ontario and the world we live in. She stood up for what she believed in and encouraged all women to be more engaged in the political process. Mayor McCallion's achievements are notable for their number and scale, as well as the social atmosphere in which she began her career.

Though women had been elected mayor of other Canadian cities previous to Mayor McCallion, political life was nonetheless widely regarded during the 1960s, when she entered politics, to be a man's domain. Her continued participation in public life since that time, and even into retirement, makes her a brilliant example to women and, indeed, all Ontarians.

I'm honoured to work with my female colleagues on this side of the House, along with our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, the first female Premier in Ontario, as former mayor Hazel McCallion did, to bring more women into politics and to educate and empower future generations of women politicians.

Once passed, I will be especially proud to share it with the many female leaders in my community and all my constituents in Davenport.

Earlier this year, I was able to recognize a number of these female leaders in Davenport with the Leading Women/Leading Girls program, led by the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, minister responsible for women's issues, a program that acknowledges and celebrates women and girls who demonstrate exceptional leadership

in working to improve the lives of others in their community.

Every year since being elected, I have participated in Girls Government, a bipartisan initiative that aims to encourage more women into politics by giving girls a first-hand taste of politics and political advocacy. Giving young people their first-hand look at the Ontario Legislature and how policies are made will set them on a path to becoming more engaged citizens and to become the leaders of tomorrow.

My goal is to encourage them to become involved because, no matter what your age, you are never too old or too young to participate in politics, and you must always keep learning and growing in your life. It is important that young girls know that they can and should play an active role in their communities.

I also want women and girls to know that, just as former mayor Hazel McCallion did, they can stand up for what they believe is right and that they can step into the shoes of trailblazing women in politics, like Hazel McCallion and our very own Premier Kathleen Wynne.

As a female MPP, I feel it is our collective duty as members of provincial Parliament to support this private member's bill. I thank once again the member for Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing it forward. Long live Hurricane Hazel.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day.

It's very exciting to get up and hear all about encouraging women in politics. It's something, I think, that we'd like to see more of—more of us all working together—and it doesn't mean that it has to be women encouraging women. We like to see men encouraging men, and women encouraging men as well. As our new Prime Minister likes to say, it's 2016. Let's get it done.

1410

The Jewish community—
Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, I'm happy to quote him.

In fact, on September 13, I was the speaker at Equal Voice, which is exactly that, an organization to encourage women to get involved in politics, and Nancy Coldham, who ran for MP for the Liberals in my riding of Thornhill in the last federal election, and Alanna Newman, who works for my colleague the member for York–Simcoe, were there.

They call it She Did You Can: All-Party Women MPP Speaker Series. It was very exciting to be there and to network, to see some of the questions that the women have and how they want to get involved. The best part of it all is to see the women helping the other women.

Hazel wasn't a very tall woman. She was 5'2", but she was taller than me, so congratulations, somebody is shorter than you. She was a Canadian politician and businesswoman who served as the mayor of Mississauga, of course, from 1978 to 2014. But she was much more than

that. She was an international celebrity. She was very well known all over, not just in Canada, but all over, in political circles in the world. She was first elected in 1978, but was the longest-serving mayor in Mississauga's history. She served 36 years. Her supporters gave her the nickname Hurricane Hazel because of her outspoken political style.

I saw an example of that outspoken political style. She was a fantastic speaker. Just a couple of weeks ago, at the Wealth One Bank of Canada grand opening at Le Parc in my riding—it was very interesting, because I'm just going to read a few of the speakers that were there: the Honourable Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance; Mayor Frank Scarpitti was on the list, but I didn't actually see him, so he must have spoken at another reception there; Wealth One bank president and CEO Charles Lambert; vice-chair Daryl Yeo; founder and vice-chair Shenglin Xian; the Honourable John McCallum, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the Honourable Victor Oh, senator for the federal government; the Honourable Bing Xue, consul general of China; the Honourable Michael Chan, Minister of International Trade; and Hazel McCallion, as well as myself.

Hazel McCallion, by far, was one of the most dynamic speakers there. I don't want to insult myself or anybody else there, but she was just powerful. The room was very quiet, and she was very passionate. You could tell that she was just so happy for the first regulated Chinese-Canadian bank to have their grand opening in Canada.

She was a professional hockey player in Montreal, and I'm from Montreal as well. I think she was very passionate about the Maple Leafs and continues to be passionate and cheer them on.

A famous story in the news about Hazel is from April 2006, when there was a police standoff with a distraught man who was threatening to kill himself. This went on for five hours. You can imagine the stressful, difficult situation. Hazel McCallion, the mayor, appeared on the scene and demanded to the gentleman that he stand down so that the police, the paramedics, the fire personnel—everybody who was there—could get on and attend to more important matters. And the man did stand down. So there is the voice of authority. I think that sometimes it's not just what you say; it's how you say it that matters.

I think that it's very impressive to be here today, not just to talk about Hazel McCallion. I often talk about the Jewish community, which I'm part of and I represent in a lot of ways. The Jewish community likes to recognize people after they're gone. They find it peculiar to name something after somebody or recognize somebody when they're alive. But isn't it nice to recognize somebody when they're there to enjoy it? I think that it's nice that we're here today.

I want to recall my own late mother, who got her CA when 500 people got their chartered accountant licence in Quebec in the late 1950s, and she was the only woman. She had a tough time of it because she was married, she was starting a family and she was pregnant, writing her exams. She recalls how the gentlemen, her future

colleagues, were all smoking while writing the exams, even though she asked them not to. It was a difficult time for women.

I think it's hard for us to realize just how far we've come. We've all come a long way. I know the expression is, "You've come a long way, baby," but we're nobody's baby, of course. And we really have come a long way. I think it's important for us to recognize the women who were the trailblazers, not just Hazel McCallion but all the women who made it possible for us to be here today in this fantastic province, in this fantastic country, celebrating all the diversity of cultures and religions, but yes, also the gender equality that we really enjoy here today.

I want to thank specifically, as I know other people have—but in case people watching at home don't realize, our Speaker is female. We sometimes make the mistake and say "Mr. Speaker," but it gives us such great pleasure all the time to say "Madam Speaker." So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to contribute some comments about my constituent Hazel McCallion.

Hazel is everybody's role model if you're in elected office in the city of Mississauga. A great deal has been said, and a great deal of Hazel's life has been covered. Some of our speakers have talked about what must it be like to follow an act like Hazel McCallion, so I have a story to add to that.

Our current mayor, the fourth mayor in Mississauga's history, Bonnie Crombie, who served with me as my overlapping member when she was the federal member in Mississauga–Streetsville, was elected in 2015 to succeed Hazel McCallion. Hazel, of course, kept coming to a lot of the functions after her term as mayor was over. One day, Bonnie showed up to a function. She was speaking to me, and I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "I don't know how to take this event that occurred just a short time ago." I said, "Well, tell me about it."

She said, "Well, I showed up to an event, and I was running a little bit behind. I went up to the organizers and I said, 'I've got a really tight schedule. Can we start the event on time?'" The gentleman who was organizing the event said to Mayor Crombie, "Well, we're ready to start. We're just waiting on the mayor." Bonnie looked at them and said, "I'm here." They said, "Not you. Hazel McCallion." Bonnie was telling me this and, of course, I just collapsed in a heap of laughter. I said, "Bonnie, even you have to realize that's a very funny story."

But that's just the shadow that Hazel McCallion has cast over our city. It illustrates the reservoir of goodwill that a woman who was the mayor between 1978 and 2015 has left behind.

A great deal of Hazel's reputation was earned very early in perhaps her moment of trial by fire, which occurred during the Mississauga train derailment. When that particular train, which contained a number of cars containing liquid chlorine, derailed, there was the

Mississauga evacuation, which is referred to, to this day, as the Mississauga miracle. There was no looting. There were no lives lost. The situation was cleaned up. Everybody returned to their homes and life continued.

But during that time, I don't think Hazel slept more than the occasional hour or two for nearly a week. She attended everything; she showed up everywhere. At that point, the legend of Hazel McCallion was firmly established. To Hazel's credit, she said, "The reason I don't put up signs, and the reason that I don't conduct a re-election campaign, is people see who I am and where I am from election to election. And if they want to vote for me, they're welcome to vote for me. If they don't, they're welcome not to." As my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South has pointed out, Hazel McCallion was elected time after time, with margins of victory in excess of 90% of the vote.

Speaker, that's what I'd like to add to this discussion here today. I know that one of my colleagues has a few points of his own to add.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Madam Speaker, I just want to, first of all, say welcome to my former colleague Raymond Cho. We sat on metro council with Alan Tonks for many years. We did a lot of good work together in those days. All the best of luck here in your new role up the street here, Raymond. Congratulations.

I also wanted to say that I think we should commend the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, Amrit Mangat. She's the first woman of South Asian background to be elected as an MPP in the provincial Legislature. So there's a lot of firsts here. There's the first female Deputy Speaker from beautiful Scarborough. We can go on.

1420

The thing about Hazel: I remember one time when I happened to be between, I should say, or with Hazel McCallion and Mel Lastman. They got into a bit of an argument about the subway at the time, whether North York should get the subway or they should extend the subway out to Mississauga. Anyway, those were two characters. There aren't mayors like that anymore. It was quite an interesting debate.

Hazel: We forget she's from the Gaspé. We wonder why she was so resilient, so tough. Well, anybody that comes from Port-Daniel in the Gaspé—about 300 people there. So she came from the Gaspé to Montreal to Streetsville. I think I first met her when she was the mayor of Streetsville. Streetsville was eventually amalgamated into Mississauga. She came really from the grassroots.

She never forgot ordinary people. That was what Hazel was all about. No matter whether she was with Prime Ministers, whether she was with dignitaries or business people, she treated everyone the same. Straight up, told it as it is—she spoke what was on her mind. Sometimes people say, "Oh, she's pretty rough around the edges." I say, "Yes." She used to drive herself; she didn't have a driver.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Still does.

Mr. Mike Colle: She's back driving again. She had a couple of accidents at one point.

Anyway, Hazel would show up at meetings—drive in herself; drive home herself in her car. “I don't need a driver. What do I need that for?” That's the kind of mayor she was.

If you look at Mississauga, which was a very small community—really Streetsville, Cooksville, all those little hamlets there—she built it into one of Canada's great cities. It gets overshadowed by the megalopolis of Toronto and Hamilton, but there is Mississauga right there. It's a huge city, with 800,000 plus. It doesn't get enough attention. But Hazel made sure we knew it was on the map.

She is a real credit to not only women, but I think she's a really amazing Canadian. She really is a credit to this country. That's why this bill is very appropriate: to recognize this day, to say thanks to Hazel for whatever she did—and she did so much—and what kind of role model she is to all the young girls and women out there that they've really got someone. The pages that are here should know about this great Canadian hero, Hazel McCallion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South to wrap up.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the member from Thornhill, the member from Davenport, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for their wonderful comments about Hazel McCallion.

As my friend the member from Huron–Bruce said, today we should also celebrate other women, and she is right. I'm very proud to say that I have the opportunity to serve alongside the first female Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne. As I have said earlier, there are many successful inspiring female role models, but today the focus is on Hazel.

As my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh said, she's a very popular leader. By every account, she's a very popular political leader. The member from Thornhill said that she's an international celebrity, which is right. In 2004, there was a congregation of 50 mayors from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, and she won the best mayor in the world. Also in 2007, she won the Trailblazers and Trendsetters Award, and she was recognized as Canada's most powerful woman. As the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said, whatever she has given, she has given us too much. She is a true leader, and it's very important that this bill should become a law.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll vote on this particular bill at the end of all the debates.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Transportation should institute a

five-business-day service guarantee for reinstating drivers' licences suspended for medical reasons following certification by a physician that the person is fit to drive.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. McDonell has moved private member's notice of motion number 7. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We are representatives of the people of Ontario. We are trusted by our ridings' voters to make decisions and implement policies that are good for everyone. Getting your driver's licence is a rite of passage for many young Ontarians, especially in rural Ontario. Being able to own and drive a vehicle gives you the independence and mobility that allows you to seek employment wherever you please and take care of friends and family who can't drive.

Rural residents are particularly dependent on their vehicles and their licences. The closest grocery store could be 50 or 100 kilometres away, while the closest health facility is likely to be in a larger city such as Cornwall, Brockville or Ottawa. In rural Ontario, driving isn't just a choice; it's a necessity. Where I grew up in Lancaster township, the closest corner grocery store was over five kilometres away. My high school was 25 kilometres away and the nearest hospital was over 50 kilometres away. As you can see, driving a car was a necessity for my family, especially since the local corner grocery store has closed under this Liberal government's reign, unable to survive the excessive regulations, taxes and fees.

The Ministry of Transportation has the duty to ensure that Ontario's roads are safe for all users. When someone's health could make them an unsafe driver, medical professionals must take away their licence and notify the ministry. Public safety is everyone's concern, and I doubt anyone in this chamber would debate a physician's educated opinion about a patient's fitness to control a vehicle. These suspensions are not permanent. They are just enforced until the MTO receives a physician's report stating that the person is again capable of driving a vehicle safely.

MTO, however, is slow and prone to mistakes when processing these reports. Over the years, my office and the offices of many of my colleagues have received many constituents' complaints about the delay in getting their licences reinstated. The ministry's response on all of our inquiries has always been to wait 30 business days and not bother inquiring about the file until that deadline has passed. It was disheartening to tell my constituents the news. For every suspended healthy driver caught in this artificially long wait time, there are stories of lost earnings, missed medical appointments, loss of employment and a very clear risk of financial hardship. My constituents have had enough, and we've launched a petition to fix this problem. I read that into the record just today.

The petition followed a very simple principle: If it takes hours to suspend a licence, based on the physician's

advice, it shouldn't take six weeks to take a physician's advice to the contrary. My constituents asked for a reasonable time frame within which to deliver a reinstatement once the doctor has cleared the driver. We believe that is five business days. Such a time frame allows the ministry plenty of time to review the medical documents for completeness, despite it still being an inconvenience to the constituent, who would need to take a week of what is essentially unpaid leave.

As soon as the petition was launched, a steady stream of frustrated residents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry came to my office and signed it. So far, there are over 300 signatures, and more are coming in every day. To our surprise, we managed to achieve almost immediate success. The ministry immediately changed its tone when dealing with the medical review cases, assuring us and constituents that the average processing time was indeed decreasing. All of this after being told, just before the petition, to not bother calling until six weeks have passed.

Speaker, it shouldn't take the intervention of a member's office or public frustration to boil over into a petition to prod a public service to actually work better for us. I cannot see how a system so stubbornly rigid one day can improve overnight, coincidentally following the recent release of a petition demanding better service from the medical review section.

1430

Before our petition was launched, the medical review section had also indicated to some constituents who had had to submit additional documents that they would be credited with some waiting time they had actually had to endure. This was as clear an indication as any that the 30-business-day delay wasn't a matter of backlogs or justified review time; it was an artificially imposed and enforced deadline. This is why it's important for this Legislature to demand that the Ministry of Transportation make a clear, measurable commitment to serving our drivers better.

In response to the petition I have presented, the Minister of Transportation stated that the division was meeting or exceeding the service guarantee, meaning that they were reviewing files on a shorter time scale. I am pleased that the ministry recognized that there was a problem in the medical review section and took steps, whichever they were, to address at least part of the delay, however small. The issue, however, has not gone away. Ontarians deserve to be served promptly and efficiently by their government. Our residents and businesses already pay through the nose for this government's spending, despite seeing front-line and essential public services becoming less and less accessible.

Medical reviews of driver's licence suspensions are an essential service. Without prompt and guaranteed service in this area, residents of rural Ontario and all workers who depend on their driver's licence in order to work are at risk of losing their jobs. Long and unnecessary suspensions cause businesses to lose money and workers to lose earnings. What is a temporary suspended worker

to tell his employer? As things stand today, workers, owner-operators and caregivers must tell those who depend on them that they need alternative arrangements for six weeks.

The minister can parade his "meeting and exceeding" talking points all he wishes. However, it doesn't change the insensitive stance taken by this department. The stance boils down to, "You're out of a licence for six weeks, period. Consider any day less than that a gift from us." Speaker, good and prompt service isn't for the government to bestow upon us, akin to a ruler's bounty for their people. We have, through our taxes and fees, given this government the funds necessary to deliver the public services that a province such as Ontario could be proud of. Instead of spending that responsibly, the current government has caused waste and a culture of entitlement to spread through all departments. Thirty business days to take a physician's advice is not a service, especially when it only takes hours to take the same advice to pull a licence in the first place.

Here are a couple of examples of the way the medical review section has failed my constituents:

—a high incidence of wait times in excess of even the 30-business-day time frame.

—Numerous constituents mention that medical reports are lost by the ministry, with this situation only rectified through our office's intervention.

—Constituents were given conflicting information by the ministry on whether their licences were suspended or not, in one case giving a person the impression their licence would be suspended in a few weeks, and then sending the same person a letter telling them that the licence was already suspended. This is irresponsible and can make an unwilling criminal of a perfectly innocent and safe driver. It's just not justifiable.

This motion is about a simple principle: transparent, accountable and prompt service for all Ontario residents. The Ministry of Transportation is already processing driver licence reinstatements faster than the stated 30-day service guarantee. This is a question of service. When Ontarians who depend on their driver's licence tell those who depend on them that they'll have to wait, I want them to be able to say confidently that they will be out of a licence for just a few days, rather than six weeks. The unjustifiably long service guarantee isn't just an artificial number concocted within the ministry for internal use; it's a real source of frustration for all those caught up in the process. It is the only reference drivers can give their clients, their employers and their loved ones. Since the ministry is already able to process these files faster, it should improve the service guarantee to reflect this new, improved situation.

Ontarians are ready to endure a week-long inconvenience for the sake of strong public safety. Telling them that they must wait six weeks is just insensitive and cruel. So I'm asking this government and this chamber to make a commitment to service—service to those who elect us, to those who, through their hard work and dedication, build businesses, innovate, work, raise families and allow this government to function.

The PC caucus's and my message to Ontario drivers is clear: We are here for you. We are with you. We know you wish to be safe, and we want you to keep it that way.

My message to the government is even clearer: Commit to serving the people of this province and commit to giving them better service than the unjustifiably slow one you guarantee today. Despite being able to deliver better, you can deliver faster. Be proud of it, and make that a new, better public standard. You have nothing to lose.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. How come you're having a hard time with that one? We're always in committee, and we know each other.

Anyway, I'm pleased to stand here on behalf of the great people of Algoma-Manitoulin and add my voice to this motion. I actually want to commend the member because, as he is experiencing, as many of our constituency offices are experiencing, this is one of those problems that we need to deal with. Too many individuals are suffering huge losses. Families are being hurt, income is being closed, jobs are being lost and hardship is being incurred. I commend the member for bringing this forward. I'm 100% in favour of this motion as this issue is one that I see consistently in my office.

I say, "I see." I sometimes get to talk to the constituents about their challenges that they're having as far as getting their reinstatement, but it's my front line that is dealing with this; it's my constituency staff. I know that Grant, Cindy and Vicky are at the constituency office right now. They're the ones that deal with the people that come in every single day with a variety of issues. This is one that they were quite excited to actually help out and provide me with some background as far as what they've been hearing through the constituency office. Like I said, my staff have been working with this for a very long time.

As it stands now, MTO has a 30-day review policy. However, in most cases, MTO reviews the client's file towards the end of that 30-day deadline. What that means is, it doesn't matter. You come in with the information. "Thank you very much. It goes on top of the file, and I'll look at it in 30 days." So you've lost 30 days there.

Basically, if you could give this five-day guarantee that you'll be able to look at that information and reinstate that licence to that individual—that's what we're looking for, and that's what the member is calling for, which is common sense, something that we should be using a little bit more in this Legislature.

The MTO will require further information, delaying it again. Thus, mailing it out to the individual, by the time he gets his mail, he has to reset another doctor's appointment. A further delay is happening because—guess what?—in northern Ontario, in order to see your family doctor, you're looking at anywhere between, if you're lucky, a month to a month and a half.

Once the client has obtained the requested information and it is submitted to MTO by themselves or by their

doctor, a new 30-day waiting period begins. So continues the vicious circle, and it just goes on and on and on, and the delay happens, and delay and delay and delay.

In the meantime, this guy, this individual, or this woman is losing an opportunity for a job and is going through drastic hardship. Their income is not coming in and they're facing some really tough financial hardship.

My office has received several calls from transport drivers, bus drivers and couriers regarding their suspended licences due to medical forms or reports having to be reviewed by MTO. In most cases, these individuals are months without a licence, which directly impacts their work and income and, in some cases, has led to job loss because of delays in the review process. We have had several constituents contact our office because they have been without a licence for over 12 months due to the current MTO medical review process.

My constituency staff have been dealing with one case in particular, where a constituent approached my office for assistance after his driver's licence was suspended because his medical report contained a medication that, in some cases, is used for the treatment of epilepsy. He didn't have epilepsy. MTO made the assumption that he was epileptic and suspended his licence, when in fact this medication was prescribed to him for migraine headaches. To date, his licence is still suspended until the doctor submits proof that his patient does not have epilepsy. In order to satisfy MTO, the doctor is contemplating sending him for an MRI as proof that he doesn't have epilepsy, thus further delaying the reinstatement of his driver's licence.

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Can you imagine the time and effort? And mind you that these doctors aren't readily available for review in our communities. As well, having to resort to referring his patients for unnecessary testing is a waste of health care resources and leaves the constituent unemployed until the matter is finally resolved.

These are only some of the cases that we deal with. A gentleman who had a problem with his eyes was required to go to the optometrist. He went to the optometrist and sent in the information. The information came back. MTO wasn't satisfied with the tests that he took. They wanted him to go for an Optomap. They sent him back. He got that test done, and sent it in. In the meantime, Madam Speaker, we're talking about 90 days now. This individual lost out on a perfect opportunity in order to get the employment that he was looking for. It created some hardship. Basically, it's unnecessary.

I wholeheartedly support the member's motion as it's presented, and I hope that we can actually deal with this so that a lot of our constituency offices—every single one of us in this room knows that this is an issue and knows how we could tackle this to handle it. I hope that we have struck an ear on the other side of the table so that we can actually address this problem, because it is one that is bureaucratic. I see my friend—I know that I've struck your ear, and I hope that we can work together, along with the member who proposed this bill, in order to handle this and fix it.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I'm very pleased to join the discussion this afternoon on motion 7. Let me start by saying that it's very important to point out that our government does care very deeply about the safety of our province's roads, including the safety of all road users. In fact, we have the second-safest roads in all of North America.

I know that our government's mandatory reporting process for physicians and optometrists is a very important way that we are working to ensure that our roads remain safe. As of October 2014, if a physician or an optometrist has a patient who is 16 years of age or older with a medical or vision condition that may make it unsafe for them to drive, the medical professional has a duty to report that information.

The motion that we're debating today, motion 7, specifically looks at cutting the time it takes for the Ministry of Transportation to reinstate a person's licence if the licence was suspended for medical reasons. At my constituency office in Kitchener Centre, my staff has on a number of occasions dealt with cases involving licences that were suspended for medical reasons, and they work very quickly to resolve these issues.

I can tell you that our government is already meeting or exceeding customer service standards for reviewing medical reports and responding to Ontarians on the status of their licences. This year, 99.5% of medical reports were processed within the 30-day customer standard, and 90% were processed within 10 days. That's very impressive.

In order to be fair to all drivers, the ministry reviews these reports on a first-come, first-served basis. It's clear that this process is meeting customers' needs while maintaining the important balance between road safety and ensuring Ontarians' mobility.

As I mentioned earlier, our government's record on road safety is clear. In June 2015, our government passed Bill 31. With the passage of this bill, we're committed to making our roads even safer by expanding medical reporting requirements, clarifying mandatory and discretionary reporting requirements in future regulation, and setting out what specific driver information must be provided on mandatory forms.

I know that members on both sides of this House value these commitments, as Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, was passed with all-party support—so we did have their support on this particular bill; they know that it's important as well.

Speaker, I would also like to take some time to talk to you about the ongoing work that we're doing to continually strengthen the medical review process. This work includes frequent conversations with medical professionals. I know that you, in your previous life, were a medical professional. You served as a nurse.

Currently, these discussions are focusing on identifying specific high-risk medical conditions and functional

challenges that should be included in the mandatory reporting process, and additional medical professionals who should be included in reporting legislation.

We know that this work is going to help to improve an already strong reporting process. However, we're also aware that work is being undertaken to ensure this process continues to meet Ontarians' customer service expectations for many years to come. This work includes improving medical reporting forms; working with staff to maximize the use of technology for faster, more efficient case processing; and introducing electronic medical reporting that's going to see physicians submitting information electronically, allowing some forms to be processed automatically.

It's very important that all members of this House know how the government applies medical standards. Our approach is balanced, using medical standards outlined under the Highway Traffic Act; national standards created by the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators; and through consultation with doctors and nurse practitioners for more complex cases. For such cases, the ministry has the support of its medical advisory committee, which is made up of 19 physicians who have a variety of medical specializations.

It's clear that our province's medical professionals are at the heart of this process. This makes us more confident, in this process, that the government is unwavering in its commitment to road safety.

We understand the appeal of the convenience being presented by the MPP from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry with his motion, but this is not a process that we are willing to rush. There is too much at stake, and we will never compromise the safety of our roads.

Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak in today's debate. I want to thank all the members of this House for participating.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this proposal brought forward by my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to address one of a series of concerns relating to medical licence review that flood our offices every year.

Speaker, I have no doubt that if you polled the MPPs here in the House today, you wouldn't be able to find one whose office isn't dealing with the impacts related to waiting times faced by those who are, rightly or wrongly, dropped into the medical licence review system.

It should come as a surprise to no one in this House to hear that the province's medical licence review system is clearly broken. It causes licence-revoked motorists to wait well beyond ministry-stated timelines for review and often leads to eventual overturned decisions while motorists' lives are put on hold.

I commend my colleague for coming forward with a proposal that will at least speed things up somewhat for those who are cleared by a physician for driving.

It's as simple as that, Speaker. Today's motion calls on the ministry to institute a five-business-day service

guarantee for reinstating drivers' licences following the submission of a medical review highlighting no issues that would warrant a continued suspension. It's a bit of a fast-track process for the medically fit, who should not be forced to face unacceptable delays that can impact so many aspects of their lives.

Just think of how much we depend on the ability to drive, Speaker. Then think of those in our more rural and remote areas, where distances to work, the doctor's office or just the grocery store are that much longer and that much more difficult to access without the bus and train transportation systems we enjoy in the more urban areas.

Now, Speaker, we all want our roads to be safe. There are those out there with medical concerns who, obviously, under supervision of medical professionals, have said that they are not fit to drive. There's no doubt that there are many instances when medical conditions should prevent a person from having a licence.

That said, there are also those out there who—again, under supervision of medical professionals—have been cleared for takeoff. They've had medical approval to get behind the wheel and yet they have to wait and endure further impacts caused by a suspension that, in these cases, is not actually warranted.

We understand the need to review the medical professional's assessment and make sure we get it right, but it's the time to actually get the folks to review the file that's the problem. Thirty business days is simply too long. As many of us know from the stories that come into our offices, even that extended timeline is often not met.

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While the ministry website tells Ontario residents, "The medical review section will review your case and take appropriate action within 30 business days," the truth is, for some folks, it's taking close to double that time. To many of those waiting for the official go-ahead, it doesn't make sense to them that it took only a day to suspend their licence based on a report, and then it takes 30 business days or longer to reinstate that same licence following a physician's clearance. As I said, I'm sure any of us here could take a glance at the office inbox and find examples of exactly what we're talking about here.

I have one from a constituent in my riding who contacted me last year, who lost his job and much more after being submerged into the medical licence review system following a stroke. He writes:

"My experience with the ministry has not only caused me inconvenience, it has cost me my job and left me unable to support myself for over six months, and now it is costing me an additional \$575 for an assessment that I must go to before they will even consider giving me my licence back!

"Here is my nightmare: I had a stroke on September 2 of last year while driving home from work.

"On October 22, I received a letter from the Ministry of Transportation, dated October 15, advising me that as of October 24, my driver's licence would be suspended.

"I immediately took the required form to my doctor and had him fill it out.

"Thirty business days from then was around December 5. When I still had no word by December 18, I called.

"When I finally spoke to a ministry person, I was advised that they had never received the report from my doctor's office.

"I immediately called the doctor and another copy of the report was sent that day. I confirmed this a couple of days later, and it was received on December 18, 2014.

"During this entire time, since the day of my stroke September 2 ... I had not been able to return to work.

"By Christmas I had recovered significantly and the doctor and therapists said there was no reason why I could not go back to work, at least on a part-time basis.

"Except that I had no way to get there since I could not drive. I live in Oshawa and work in Toronto.

"My last EI cheque was January 10. Since that date I had no income at all."

He goes on to say, "I heard nothing further until mid-February, when I called them.

"The ministry representative advised me that it had indeed been 39 business days since they had received my doctor's report but that they were extremely busy and there was a backlog.

"I finally got a letter on March 9 informing me that in order to make a decision regarding my driver's licence, that I would have to go for an assessment.

"The earliest date I could book was April 1, 2015, and the cost for the three-hour assessment is \$575.

"One last footnote: I was advised last week that the company I have worked for for the last 15 years has been sold and the new owners are bringing their own employees with them so my services will no longer be needed."

And if that last note wasn't hard enough to take, it only gets worse when you hear the conclusion that, after my office got involved and had the gentleman's assessment walked over to have his review seen immediately, he was approved to go back on the road just like that. That's an eight-month journey that could have been much less if the MTO had heeded the doctor's assessment in October.

Now, quickly, I just want to commend Alanna Tersenie. Alanna, as many of you will know, works with MPPs' offices to help constituents when they're in a driver's licence predicament, like many of them are. She does outstanding work. She is extremely responsive and does a ton of files, no doubt across the province. So I want to make special mention of her and thank her for her years of service to Ontario and Ontario motorists, and especially to the many MPPs' offices she helps. Alanna Tersenie, thank you very much.

With that, I want to again commend my colleague the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for bringing this important initiative forward.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West, and I'm

pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion today, motion 7, driver's licence reinstatement.

I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for bringing the motion forward. It's a very important topic. I know it has affected many people in my riding and across the province.

Several members have already spent some time providing a summary of the motion, so I don't want to go into too much detail and repeat what so many others have already talked about.

I just have some key points to touch on in the five minutes I have left. The motion calls for a five-business-day service guarantee for reinstating drivers' licences for anyone who has had their licence suspended for medical reasons. In order for that to happen, you have to have a physician certify that. First, they have to see that the person is medically unfit to drive to have the licence suspended and then, to have it reinstated, a physician has to certify that whatever the particular issue was has since been rectified and the person is now again fit to drive.

I think everybody in this room knows that at times it is necessary for someone to have their licence suspended for medical reasons. It's not their fault, by any means, but we are all susceptible to illnesses and for some people those illnesses mean they should not be on the road. Safety should always be paramount on the road.

I think it's important to note that when somebody is having their licence suspended for medical reasons, that can be done very quickly, which is a good thing. Sometimes it's a matter of a few hours for the process to take place, to have somebody's licence suspended. Again, that's good, because we don't want somebody on the road who is not safe being there, either for themselves or for those around them.

But unfortunately, when a physician, a professional, has since said that somebody is now medically fit to drive—so they're okay; whatever the issue is has been rectified—the process is not as quick or as timely as it is to take the licence away. I think that's a big problem for many people, for many reasons. Many of them were discussed today. We've heard stories of people who have to drive for work. That's their livelihood. I'm not just talking about getting to work, which is an issue, but they actually drive for a living. For it to take as long as it does in some cases for them to get that licence back, they end up losing their employment. They lose their income, which is really unfair.

If there's a process in place to remove a licence as quickly as a few hours, there should be a process in place to get someone their licence back in a reasonable time frame. And I think what the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—the five business days—is asking for and suggesting is not unreasonable. If they can work so quickly to take it away, they should be able to work fairly quickly to reinstate the driver's licence.

There are a few of my colleagues who have spoken on different occasions about this particular issue. They've highlighted that it can take up to 30 days or more in some cases for drivers' licences to be reinstated. In fact, in

2014-15, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin received 243 complaints about the ministry's medical review section, up from 141 the previous year, which is a 72% increase. And I'm sure that there are many people in the province who don't know that there is a process in place for them to even go to the Ombudsman to complain when there's an issue, so this number could be even larger.

The process as it is currently administered really undervalues how many people—I'm going to speak specifically to my community of Windsor. It understates the need for people to drive for their career, for the family or even for pleasure. We have a beautiful waterfront, and people like to get out on Riverside Drive to drive the waterfront and take in the sights.

It's important to point out that in Windsor, we don't just drive vehicles. We actually build award-winning vehicles that create many jobs for people in the area. So clearly, driving and automotive jobs are very important for us. Many people depend on having a licence. That's their livelihood. That's how they get to work. That's how they make the money to pay these ridiculous hydro bills. The cost of driving has increased incredibly, which is a totally separate issue, but we don't need to put any more burden on drivers.

Just to wrap up with my 27 seconds—I thought I'd have a hard time doing six minutes; the time has gone in no time—I just want to touch on what the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, the member from Kitchener Centre, said, which is that the government never compromises the safety of our roads. I would just like to point out to her on that particular statement—and I hope the members on the other side are listening—that if you really, really believe that statement that you never compromise the safety of our roads, then you really should honour your promise to widen Highway 3, because we've recently had another accident.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair again. May I just take a quick second to congratulate the new MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River? Congratulations, Mr. Cho. The riding touches the northwest corner of my riding, so welcome to the Scarborough riding as an MPP. I look forward to working with you on areas of mutual interest concerning Scarborough. I also represent Pickering, but that's all going to change later. Anyway, I digress. Thank you, Speaker, for indulging me there.

I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for bringing this forward. He was my critic when I was first in cabinet as the Minister of Consumer Services. I really enjoy being on House duty Thursday afternoon to hear debates of PMBs generally, but I've always appreciated my good working relationship with him on issues concerning consumer services at that time, and I enjoy hearing the debate as well.

We've heard about a number of things related to this motion, and I think the debate here has been quite con-

structive. You have heard from the government members about some of the statistics, including that MTO is currently meeting or exceeding the 30-day customer service standard. They're processing 90% of cases within 10 days, so that's pretty fantastic. It doesn't mean that there isn't room to improve, of course.

I want to touch on something related to this. I had a constituent involved in a case similar to this—a very special constituent. That constituent is my husband. Shortly after I became the Minister of Consumer Services—literally a few days after—I got a call. I was getting briefed, as you do when you get a new portfolio, and I got a call. It was my husband, and he said, “I think I've had a heart attack.” I was like, “Oh my gosh! Where are you? What's happening?” He was on the train. Of course, he didn't stay in Kingston, where he was when he first suspected this. He decided to get on the train to come home because he was too stubborn. I love him, but he shouldn't have done that.

Anyway, we got him into care at Rouge Valley hospital, at the cardiac centre there. It's a regional cardiac centre. It's been there for about 20 years. They provide fantastic service. My husband had never had heart problems before. So in he went. It was late in the day, so I think it was the next day they did the scopy thing—I forget what you call that kind of surgery—and he had a stent put in. Then they found that there were two blocks, so he needed to have two stents put in.

Then, of course, once he was stabilized—and he did quite well after that—the doctor talked to us about the driver's licence situation. I'm sharing this story because, on top of the rules—and I'm sensing that we all agree that if a doctor says someone is not fit to drive, then that licence must be suspended ASAP. The communication is really important because here I am in the hospital. I'm a new minister. We've never had these issues before, so it was important that the doctor talk to him and to me and our family to make sure he wouldn't drive, right? Because sometimes it's overwhelming, especially if it's a new medical situation and you don't know what's going on. It's very important that that be reinforced, that he should not drive and that I and the kids should make sure he doesn't drive.

My husband was compliant and he needed to be away from work and to take it easy for a number of weeks. I appreciate that some people recover very quickly from a medical situation, and I appreciate that they're going to want to get driving again as soon as their doctor clears them. But in this case, Stephen needed to be off work.

But I really want to emphasize the communication piece because there's so much information, when you have a sudden medical crisis like that, about what to do, what the next steps are, what your follow-up appointment is—and, by the way, don't drive. As I said, he didn't get medical help right away when he probably should have. Thankfully, he did listen to the doctor, who said, “You shouldn't drive,” and the doctor talked to me to use me as a reinforcer to make sure he didn't drive. So that's really, really important.

I know the MTO is working to improve their processes wherever they can. I understand they're improving medical reporting forms; they're improving the use of technology; they're introducing electronic medical reporting that will see physicians submitting information to the ministry electronically, allowing some forms to be processed automatically. These kinds of efforts need to be ongoing—we need to keep up with the technology—but, as said by all members of the House, safety is job one when it comes to our roads. It's not just the safety of the patients; it's the safety of everybody who is on the road.

As I said, in my experience the communication piece was really, really important. I'm pleased to see that the service standards are high and that MTO is working to make those standards even higher.

I think this is a good bill that has been brought forward and that is worthy of consideration. I again thank the member opposite. He's a great member and he was a great critic when I was in consumer services. In this case, he's looking out for the consumer, the patient, but also the consumers of our highways and roads, to make sure that we're all safe and that we minimize the risk of injury or worse to us when we're on the roads, if someone is on the road who shouldn't be there.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for allowing me to share my story.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise for my colleague sitting right beside me, the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, on his motion for a service guarantee for driver's licence reinstatement.

It's very interesting because, before I even agreed to speak on this, I hadn't realized that almost every speaker here has mentioned my former profession of optometry and how valuable and how involved it is in who is able to drive on our roads. I want to recognize everybody in the optometry, ophthalmology and medical community for all the fantastic work they do in terms of assessing people for their driver's licence permits when there are medical concerns.

It's much more difficult, I think, than people here sometimes appreciate, because you can imagine the absolute hysteria from people when they're being told that they're going to lose their ability to drive. Oftentimes they have driven to the appointment, and you're so uncomfortable with them driving that you really have to advise them to have somebody come not only to pick them up but to pick up their car.

Oftentimes, it's something very simple like cataract surgery, where, once they've had the implants, they're able to see like that. Sometimes two days after surgery or a day after surgery, the doctor feels they're safe to drive again. Yet the medical review committee of non-medical professionals—let's face it; they're trained to just analyze what the medical professionals are recommending—seem to drag their feet.

I think that's what we're discussing here today. We're not discussing public safety; we're not discussing who

should possibly lose their driver's licence or who should get their driver's licence back. We're just saying that, once people have passed all the criteria necessary to get their driver's licence reinstated—not just so that they can drive for leisure, but so that they can drive for a living, so that they can drive their kids to their programs—once they are in the clear, why should it take up to six weeks for them to actually get their driver's licence back?

I think there are many people who see colleagues at work who have lost their driver's licence for so long, should have had it back, still haven't gotten it back and maybe even lost their job. It makes them afraid to go for medical checkups. That's what really concerns me here today. We should be doing everything we can to encourage people to go for medical checkups. Yet, when they're hearing from people that it took so long and it was so difficult to get their driver's licence back, they're stressed out. They don't go for their medical checkups. They can be having health problems that could be dealt with in a timely way and aren't dealt with until it's an emergency room visit, and it could be that the cost to the medical system is actually much higher than if they would have gone in the first place.

1510

People are stressed out when they lose their licence, and we all know what happens when people have stress. They can have medical problems—and dire medical problems, even strokes and heart attacks—because of the foot-dragging by the review committee. With electronic health records now, and emails—not just faxes anymore, Madam Speaker, but with all the electronic communications devices that we have now—there's really no reason for it to take six weeks for somebody who has been cleared medically to get their driver's licence back.

We're hearing all about the lack of bus drivers here in Toronto. How many of those bus drivers that could be driving for us maybe just haven't gotten their licence back because they have had cataract surgery in July and they thought by September they'll have their driver's licence back, and maybe the doctor wasn't able to assess them until August? Perhaps they were perfectly capable of driving the school bus beginning in September, but they weren't able to because they didn't have their suspension taken off their licence.

I think that there could be a better system in place. Perhaps people don't have to actually send in their physical driver's licence and have a new one sent back to them. Perhaps we could have a system—I certainly would have been willing to have a locked box in a locked room with people's driver's licences in it, holding it for them until I got the all-clear from the ministry to physically give it back to them. Why should we have to actually suspend their licence, take it away and print them a new licence?

I'm hoping that we're going to have all-party support here today for this motion. I think it's important, and I think that it's something that resonates across the province in every sector, in every demographic.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Kitchener Centre, Kitchener–Conestoga, Windsor West, the minister responsible for women's issues and the member from Thornhill.

I think the issue that we're missing here is that we've got the medical practitioner who has certified that the person is safe to drive. I've seen cases where we've had people come into the office where they've gone into emergency, their licence has been pulled, they see the specialist and then the standard is something else. But now they're into the 30 days.

We've had people come in where the documents have gotten lost. Normally they just tell us to wait 30 days, so it's hard to tell that these documents are lost until the 30 days pass and we're allowed to really dig into the case. Now, in one case, they said, "Well, we lost the documents. It was two weeks so we'll give them credit for the two weeks so they only have to wait four weeks."

The doctor has given certification. This is not a safety issue. This is the person that actually believed it wasn't safe. They've now said, "Yes, it is safe to drive." We have livelihoods—we had a truck driver that came in. He was at the point of losing his job, and he was certified as okay to drive. This case should never have lost it in the first place, but he did and he was subject to the 30 days.

Then we have the issue of the office closures. When people go, they have to get there. They have to have a relative get them there because they have no licence. Really, when you look at it, what are we doing? Maybe, possibly, the process is not working today. Maybe they have to modify it. But in this day of electronic document transfer, surely we can get a doctor to sign something off. If they're concerned about the document, have it re-sent the same day and get the service that our residents expect. When you are looking at somebody's livelihood, I think it's not too much to ask that we look at trying to do a five-business-day service. Hopefully, they'll be able to beat that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on the motion at the end of the debate.

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 D'APPUI AUX EXPERTS EN AGRICULTURE DANS LEUR DOMAINE

Ms. Thompson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pesticides.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a great privilege to stand in the House today, in the Ontario Legislature, and present the debate—or kick off the debate, I'll say—on a very important issue that has struck all of Ontario. I'm so gung-ho to get started on this particular debate, because

it's something that's near and dear to all of us. It's with regard to Ontario's food production. It's Bill 4, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act, or as it's better known to stakeholders I've met with, the Supporting Agricultural Experts in their Field Act.

Before I really get started into the debate, I want to recognize the numerous stakeholders that I've spoken with. I truly appreciate their time and their constructive feedback. I spoke to the Ontario Beekeepers' Association; OABA, the Ontario Agri Business Association; Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association; CCAs; Ontario Institute of Agrologists; Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Grain Farmers of Ontario; the Christian farmers federation; and numerous county federations of agriculture, as well as soil and crop members. I would be remiss if I didn't recognize that we've played phone tag with the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, but I truly hope I can get speaking to Ali in the near future.

In addition to all of those organizations and stakeholders, I want to give a special shout-out to a few more people. First of all, Susan Fitzgerald of the certified crop advisers, as well as Clare Kinlin have been a tremendous help in helping drill down and speak specifically to how we can make regulations work. I'll get to that in a second, Madam Speaker.

In addition to that, I'd like to recognize and welcome to the House Don McCabe, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Thank you very much for coming down on a Thursday afternoon. You and I go way back, and I really appreciate your commitment to Ontario agriculture, your sage advice and dogged determination to make sure we get legislation right so Ontario farmers can be the best they can be. Thank you for being here today.

Secondly, I'd like to introduce to the House Dave Ferguson. Dave has made the trek as well from Lambton county. He is involved as the local Lambton county president of the Lambton Federation of Agriculture. Dave is an example of the amazing stewards we have across this province. When I say stewards, I mean stewards of the land. Dave recognizes the importance of creating pollinator habitat. Some of the members in this House this afternoon had a chance to meet him earlier today at lunch. He very proudly—and I know I'm not supposed to have props—but he very proudly showed what he's doing on his farm, how he's taking acres out of production in order to facilitate and foster proper pollinator habitats. I congratulate him and his wife, Gabrielle, who is very much an important pillar in the agriculture industry as well, for that.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say that there should be a social responsibility that the entire province of Ontario holds when we have farmers willing to go the distance to create habitats, such as for pollinators. I thank you for all you do. You lead by example.

With that, I'd like to get started by saying I want to be very clear in this debate. It's important to recognize and celebrate the fact that in this particular issue that we're addressing today, with regard to pollinator health and

moving forward to ensure our farmers can be as productive as possible, it's important that we recognize the agri-food sector as a whole has taken great strides to understand the issues and the hard winters and compounding elements that contributed to a low bee population a couple of years ago.

They understand the issue, they've done the research, they've created a pollinator health plan, and they've educated farmers on how they can be the best stewards of the land. Collectively, the industry has moved forward, truly making the current regulations that are on the books unnecessary.

1520

But given that the regulations are now in place, I want to be perfectly clear with everyone in the House today that I did not introduce Bill 4 with the intention of challenging the restricted use that has been placed on neonicotinoids, but rather to take steps in making a difficult situation more workable for the men and women of our agri-food industry.

As you may be aware, beginning on August 31, 2017, subsection 8.2(8) of Ontario regulation 63/09 will be amended to prohibit any professional pest adviser that “derives a financial benefit from a person who manufactures or sells a class 12 pesticide or a pesticide that is used to treat a seed so that it becomes a class 12 pesticide” from performing a pest assessment. We'll get into what that really means a little bit later, but for us who know what that means, the reason for this change deeply concerns me.

Throughout the consultation process that I undertook over the last couple of months, it was suggested that the change to the regulations was being enacted based on an unfounded notion that professional pest advisers who work for a seed and crop and/or crop input company will automatically want to sell the treated seed because it costs more. Well, guess what? A treated bag of seed adds no more than approximately \$3 a bag in price, and in some instances, it's as low as 80 cents—hardly a financial windfall for anyone looking to make a big profit.

In fact, the Elgin Federation of Agriculture wrote of their findings on this matter, saying:

“This regulation will seriously curtail pest adviser services currently provided by CCAs employed by the private sector to crop producers, based solely on implied pecuniary or conflict of interest directly related to the distribution of class 12 pesticides. Interestingly, this implied charge of pecuniary or conflict of interest has not been demonstrated nor recognized to be of similar concern with respect to other competing crop input products.

“In principle, Ontario regulation 139/15 ... implies the existence of moral hazard where evidence of such behaviour has not been demonstrated.”

You know, it's interesting, because the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has also flagged this with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change directly. In their letter of September 15 to me, Don McCabe wrote, “Many engineers, accountants, dentists,

lawyers and other certified professionals provide advice to clients, despite being employed by or affiliated with a larger firm.”

Speaker, why does this government feel that limitations need to be applied to one particular body of professionals, and one that has never had a documented case of conflict to boot? That question really has to be asked here.

If this is indeed the basis for such a change, it’s disappointing and highly unfounded. In fact, just yesterday, the Minister of Agriculture said in his response to my question on the matter that his own government is reviewing the workability of these particular regulations and questions. While I appreciate that very much, it says to me that you realize that there’s a problem and you need to look into it a little bit more. So I’m glad we’re doing it collectively today during the debate.

There are two more important factors as to why this particular regulation and action limiting professional pest advisers is detrimental to the soybean and corn producers of Ontario.

First of all, the changes to the definition of a professional pest adviser will have negative implications for farmers. Farmers will be forced to end the effective professional partnerships they’ve established for perhaps dozens of years with the experts who understand their unique crop needs, soil types, field conditions and growing seasons like nobody else.

As the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture points out in their letter of support, “Many farmers work closely with CCAs at their local supplier, or with the seed companies of their choice, and have developed a trusting working relationship with them. It is likely that farmers will want to continue to work with CCAs that they know and trust.”

The Essex County Federation of Agriculture also shared their concerns with me, saying, “Farmers establish a familiarity and working relationship with their CCA over time. Legislating who they work with is truly unnecessary. Limiting employment opportunities of the already few certified crop advisers would just be another burden of regulations on an agricultural industry as a whole.”

Speaker, Bill 4 seeks to allow these relationships to continue to flourish, and it would be a shame if the politics in here caused them to die out in the field.

Secondly, according to the Ontario Certified Crop Advisor Association and the Ontario Institute Of Agrologists, as of December 15 there were 538 crop advisers, or CCAs, and 30 professional agrologists, or PAGs, licensed and willing to conduct pesticide assessments in Ontario. However, with the implementation in this particular regulation of this particular exclusionary clause, the number of professional pest advisers throughout Ontario will be reduced to only 80 qualified advisers.

For reference, I would be nervous in the north, because that leaves just two professional pest advisers to serve all of Ontario. That’s a shame, Speaker, and it should not be allowed. In fact, on September 11, I

received a letter from the Glengarry Federation of Agriculture with concerns about the reduction of PPAs this change would bring about. They said, “As far as we have been able to determine, there are all of four individuals that would meet the criteria that is set out” in the current regulation. Furthermore, it has been disclosed to our federation that at least two out of the four, for their own personal reasons, will not be conducting pest assessments for area producers.” The regulations are not working, Speaker. Bill 4 is a sincere attempt to make them workable.

I want to go on and reflect a little bit more about what farmers in eastern Ontario are saying. They’ve been very clear in letting me know that eastern Ontario farmers will be at an even greater disadvantage than farmers in the rest of the province.

I have to share with you that Bill 4 also addresses the need to let summer students conduct assessments independent of their employers. We also need to recognize that the assessments as they’re defined today do not—the methodology doesn’t make sense. We should just meet and use already existing OMAFRA standards in the Field Crop Protection Guide.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I wasn’t trying to pre-empt the minister. I’m sorry.

It’s an honour for me to stand today and comment on the member from Huron–Bruce on Bill 4. We’ve had a long working relationship working for people in the agricultural sector before we got our respective positions. We’ve continued that and I’m hoping to be able to add to this debate today.

I’d also like to recognize Don McCabe and Mr. Ferguson. He’s been here all afternoon witnessing the festivities; he maybe deserves a medal.

It’s my first opportunity to actually speak at length on anything in this Legislature since the House broke, and I think the first thing we have to talk about is that this summer we’ve had a lot of farms in drought conditions. On top of that, we’ve had a collapse in a lot of agriculture prices.

I would be remiss if I didn’t say that one thing the government needs to do is take the cap off the Risk Management Program, because otherwise you’re going to be in a position where you are going to have to have ad hoc programs. That was a good program. It was a great program, but right now it doesn’t really work because it’s not bankable, as it was designed to be, because of the gap. I would urge the minister, while he’s here, to think about doing that. It’s something that needs to be done.

This whole thing came about because of the neonicotinoid pesticide. I’m not going to go into the whole history of neonics, but I admit I have used neonics on my farm. The stuff that we used before—I grew a lot of

canola—was very harmful, even to the farmer, so we used neonics a lot because it was a lot safer.

1530

Neonics are a pesticide, so if they are used incorrectly, there are bad consequences. Farmers recognize that. They had a problem with air seeders and they fixed it. That was very proactive. I think the farming community is very willing to be proactive. They've shown that. Mr. Ferguson is good example of creating bee habitat and generally trying to work with regulators to make sure that the system works for everyone.

Deep down, farmers know that if you overuse any type of herbicide or pesticide, eventually it will lose its use. Roundup is a good example. I remember when I was young and I first used Roundup, it was a wonder chemical. We were told over and over that nothing will ever be resistant to Roundup. I remember the ads. So it's in all our best interests not to overuse chemicals of any type.

The member's bill brings forward the very odd issue of how certified crop advisers, who are connected to a company, and almost all of them are—and I'll give a shout-out to a couple of my local ones: I've worked with Terry Phillips and Ron Gravelle for years. There aren't any independent ones in our area. I think there may be one, but I'm not sure. But why is it that they have to be independent for class 12, but they're okay for the other classes? That doesn't make sense. You either trust their designation or you don't, because quite frankly, although the focus is on neonics, neonics are not the only pesticide that is used.

Why is it being treated differently? The fact of the matter is, either you trust the designation of these people or you don't. That's as clean as this argument can get. To say that they have to be totally independent, which is almost impossible, for this one, but they don't have to be independent for the rest—the ministry people watching this, the farmers at home—they're probably not watching this because they're probably doing something much more beneficial, but hopefully they'll watch it sometime when it's raining—it just doesn't make sense.

I will echo the minister: The relationship that farmers develop with crop consultants is one I don't think you can—the way agriculture is now, I don't think any single farmer has the—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Maybe a few. But to focus and drill down on the science of exactly how each product works, or whether or not you need a product, they need advice.

I'll use northern Ontario as an example. To say that these people have to be totally independent—it's just not feasible. It's always scary when you use examples, but it's like saying that a pharmacist cannot give prescriptions because he might be affiliated with the company that makes the drug. It's the same thing.

It comes down to this, and I can't say this point enough: Either you trust the designation or you don't. If you don't trust the designation, then we've got more serious problems than we think—we really do—because

farmers trust these people, and these people are trusted with every other class of pesticide.

I've had some problems right from the start with how this thing has been handled. I've said already in my remarks that I think you can overuse this pesticide. I'm not against regulating this pesticide. In the long term, it's going to be better for agriculture, because if you overuse it, it's going to lose its—I think the word is efficacy?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's like anything. If you overuse antibiotics, they lose their purpose—if you overuse anything. But then please create a regime that creates regs that work.

We're in the opposition. It's not our mandate to create the regime. It's our mandate to criticize the regime and hopefully make it better, and that, I think, is what we're trying to do today.

You have the mandate to do what you did, and I'm not going to criticize you for looking to see if you can make it better, because I know that on my farm, every year you can make things better. But this is one, this bill—whether you do it with this bill, or whether you do it with your own regulation change, it would make more sense. If it would make more sense to the agriculture community, you'd have a better buy-in as well.

One of the reasons that I think I add some benefit here, and one of the reasons I ran, is that it's great to be able to stand within this noble room and within the backrooms and make all kinds of regulations that make people feel good. It's a whole other thing to actually make regulations that work while making people feel good.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's another thing.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a whole other thing.

I think that with the neonic issue, there was a regulatory regime with the other classes of pesticides that has worked for a long time. When you create a new class—which is within your mandate—why do you have to have a different regime? It doesn't make sense to farmers. It doesn't make sense to the ag industry. And if you really think it through, it shouldn't make sense to anyone.

Some people might not want to hear this, but you can buy pesticides that can be much more damaging than neonics, from the advice of these certified crop advisers, because they are qualified and it's their job to make sure that the right chemical is used or—I can use Terry Phillips as an example—will tell you, “You know what, John? I think on that one, you would be just as well off to let it be.” That's their job. So why isn't it their job with this? We brought this up before. I asked this question in question period, I believe, in the last session. We brought this up, that this one doesn't make sense. I don't know how often I can go over that.

Is this going to fix the whole problem? I've also done some consultation on this, and one of the ones I got from this is, is this the end-all, be-all? No, and I don't think the member meant it to be. I talked to one leader of a farm group who said, “Well, this is kind of like a Band-Aid on a gaping wound.” But it is a step in the right direction, and it's a step, also, to rebuild some sort of relationship

that, in the agriculture sector, when we bring something forward that makes sense, we look at it.

We are all for increasing pollinator health. I don't think that anyone is going to question if you make this change, because, quite frankly, this part of the regulation was just bureaucratic overkill. That's what this is.

I'm going to close with this, and I know I've repeated it a bunch of times, but I think this is the crux of this matter: Either you trust certified crop advisers and their certification and their qualifications and their education and their track record—either we trust that or we don't. What the current regulation is saying is that you don't. And if you don't trust that, Minister, then we have got a really big problem on our hands, a really big problem, and that, Minister, is a problem that you have the power to fix.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a real privilege and an honour for me to have the opportunity this afternoon to comment on Bill 4, which has been proposed by my colleague from Huron–Bruce.

I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize the very thoughtful comments from my colleague the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and recognize the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Don McCabe, and Dave Ferguson, who's in the gallery today. His father, Ralph, was the federal Minister of Agriculture in the government of the Honourable John Turner.

1540

The member from Huron–Bruce—I recognize her commitment to agriculture, to her riding and to farming right across the province of Ontario.

I've said on many occasions that I always consider agriculture to be a non-partisan issue, that all 107 members in this chamber have a real interest in making agriculture successful in the province of Ontario.

Ontario's food has a reputation second to none, both domestically and nationally, and increasingly on an international basis.

Change is never easy, but farmers have a history of adapting to changes, meeting them with resilience and, more importantly, success.

As part of our government's Pollinator Health Strategy, we addressed the issue of neonics. On July 1, 2015, a regulation came into effect after extensive consultation. It was a regulation that did not ban the use of neonics, as sometimes people like to mischaracterize this issue, but rather to regulate them.

I would once again like to state that under the existing regulation, farmers who demonstrate a need are still able to access neonic-treated seed. This continues to allow farmers access to treated seed, to protect their crops when it is necessary.

We know of places in southwestern Ontario where the wireworm is a real problem. It's not necessarily such a pest in my part of Ontario, eastern Ontario, where we have clay soils.

We worked with the agriculture industry and took a phased approach to allow time for farmers to adapt and evaluate the implementation of the regulation with our stakeholders. That was important to me, as the minister representing Ontario's agri-food sector, which contributes \$36 billion to Ontario's GDP and employs over 780,000 people on a daily basis.

I must say that I had the opportunity to meet with the member from Huron–Bruce to discuss her private member's bill, and I have asked my ministry to review the contents of her bill being discussed this afternoon. I will continue to support the discussion, and we look forward to supporting this bill this afternoon and moving it on to committee. Know that we have been actively taking a look at the regulations and how we can work together to make them more workable for our farmers who work so hard every day on the ground.

Over the last couple of months, Madam Speaker, I've had the opportunity to visit communities across Ontario where we are experiencing probably the most severe drought we've witnessed in Ontario in a hundred years, particularly that band of communities that start at the city of Kawartha Lakes through to my beloved Peterborough county, into Northumberland county, Hastings county and indeed Prince Edward–Hastings. As I said in my opportunity when I spoke at the dinner at the International Plowing Match on Tuesday, when I visited Prince Edward county a short time ago, it literally brought tears to my eyes as I walked the parched earth with my friend Lloyd Crowe, to look at his corn crop and his soybean crop.

Let me get back to our Pollinator Health Strategy. I believe everyone in this House today acknowledges that pollinators, including honeybees, are essential to Ontario's agriculture sector and that they support approximately \$1 billion worth of farm activity annually to our economy.

The regulation on neonics is only one piece of a broader Pollinator Health Strategy which we've been working with Ontario's agriculture community to develop. As part of our broader strategy, we launched a production insurance plan for beekeepers that will act as both a risk management tool and support best management practices.

We also look forward to releasing our final pollinator health action plan to build on actions that this great province has already taken to protect pollinators later this year.

Farmers have a hard job, but they do it well, and my job as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is to support them each and every day. I will do this today, tomorrow and into the future, while ensuring I have the Ontario public, the next generation and the long-term health of our dynamic, thriving agri-food sector in mind.

We have taken a responsible, balanced approach. After all, Madam Speaker, it is our soil and stewardship that ensure good things grow in Ontario.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to speak today in support of my colleague and friend Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson and her bill, Bill 4, Supporting Agricultural Experts in their Field Act.

First, I want to commend her on her continued support and advocacy for a strong agri-food sector in our region of Bruce-Grey and Huron, which is really the ag hub of Ontario, and across the province. Her bill is a testament to her compassion and knowledge of our farming communities and what they need to be successful in today's regulation-heavy business environment. Just two years ago, she received unanimous consent for her motion to add agri-food to the province's grade 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum.

As she so clearly stated, we're debating a bill today that would save the jobs of Ontario's 600 licensed certified crop advisers—also known as CCAs—and 30 professional agrologists. These are the experts who help to guide crop production and nutrient management, identify diseases, pests and problem weeds, and work with farmers to find solutions so they can plant their crops and grow our food.

Bill 4 is an important bill. If passed, it would reverse the path of destruction that this government is looking to carve through our farming communities. As you're all now aware, the government has proposed regulation 63 under the Pesticides Act, which would change the definition of a professional pest adviser. Sadly, the government did so with no stakeholder consultation, or consideration of the impact on the sector.

For one, the government's regulation 63 threatens to reduce the number of professional pest advisers to 80 from the current 600 and bring the sector to a crawl. Under the proposal, farmers won't be able to access pest advisers and thus won't access the products they need to grow their crops—no crops, no food. It's unconscionable that the government would make such a drastic change, a reduction without consulting the agricultural community.

Secondly, the government's regulation would also limit who the farmers can work with by eliminating qualified crop advisers because of their employment with certain manufacturers or retailers. Limiting the farmers' access to crop advisers at a time when there are already few advisers in the field, and limiting the crop advisers' employment opportunities, will be two big burdens of regulation on the agricultural industry as a whole and will negatively impact the agricultural sector across the board.

I'm puzzled. One moment, this government is quick to boost, "Our farms are overflowing with nutritious and delicious food," and the next moment, they slap our farmers with ludicrous regulations, such as regulation 63. Clearly, our Liberal colleagues don't understand Ontario's agri-food sector.

We have almost 80,000 farmers, who generate 160,000 jobs by farming a total of 3.6 million hectares of cropland with 125 different types of crops and livestock. This is a \$14-billion industry. Why can't this government understand that farmers are real business people? Farmers are effective, capable and successful business

people. In many cases, they have to be even more flexible and creative as they're contending with Mother Nature. I applaud them and how resilient and entrepreneurial they are. The government should start treating them as such and be a supporter rather than an obstacle.

Don't legislate who our farmers can work with. It's excessive and unnecessary. Don't cut off access to the products and expert services that they need to do their job, but give them the tools and resources they need to succeed. Clearly, great challenges stand between the government's idea and reality on regulation 63.

I myself receive a lot of feedback from local farmers, like Murray Caswell from Meaford. I enjoy a good working relationship with the farming community in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Pat Jilesen, a Bruce county lamb and crop producer and now director-at-large of the OFA, Paul Wettlaufer, Les Nichols and Rob Lipsett are great ambassadors who serve on a number of provincial agencies, just to name a few.

The Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and the Grey County Federation of Agriculture and, of course, our 4-H programs and agricultural societies play a key role, along with the provincial beef, dairy, poultry and horticultural sectors, like the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. It is my honour to be as active as possible and to support them.

Again, a number of these groups are supporting my colleague's Bill 4, including the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the Glengarry Federation of Agriculture, along with federations in Elgin, Essex, Dundas and Niagara South, and the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture.

I believe that by supporting our partners in agriculture and the food they produce, we all benefit economically and environmentally. I encourage all members to support Bill 4. At the end of the day, people have to eat, and farmers have to farm if they are to be fed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

1550

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure, especially when you're in the chair. It really is special—nothing against the other speakers, Madam Chair, but you do such a great job.

Let me first say that I am glad to speak about this private member's bill, but I want to take the opportunity to thank the minister who happens to be sitting next to me at this moment for coming to my riding and for going to Hastings and Prince Edward a couple of weeks ago and having some round tables with the local folks, and, as he mentioned, to really go through these fields where there is no crop to speak of; it's really a brown field. So, thank you, Minister. I think the folks who participated really appreciated you taking the time.

I wanted to give a special shout-out to Allan Carruthers—he's the president of the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture—for helping us put this together.

Hon. Jeff Leal: He did a good job.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: And he did a good job, Speaker.

In the short time that I have, let me just say that I've heard today that the private member's bill that's in front of us today doesn't fix everything, and that's correct, Speaker. But let's just talk about that the regulation of neonics is only one piece of the broader, comprehensive Pollinator Health Strategy which we're working with the agricultural community to try to develop. How do we do this? I just want to reiterate that the Pollinator Health Strategy is comprised of the regulations being discussed here today, which I think is good; a production insurance program for breeders in Ontario; and a broader Pollinator Health Action Plan to address the additional key stressors affecting pollinators. So there's a lot on our plate here that we need to talk about.

It's now time to focus on where we go forward and the achievements that the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the industry—where we want to get to. I know that the minister talked about the impact that agriculture has in Ontario, the \$36 billion each and every year. It employs some 790,000 jobs. I think this is part of what we're trying to solve here today: to make sure that those jobs and that industry are viable. So we need to look at those things, as we have seen here today, in a non-partisan way—although some folks went a little bit off course. We won't mention any names, Speaker.

In light of this, I think we really need to keep on working together on this. I wish we could say that this, today, will solve the problem. It doesn't, but it's part of the picture moving forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I can go in any order we want. I got recognized by the Speaker.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Having been recognized, I want you to have the last word. There's no question we're going to hear some pearls of wisdom here.

Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me. I too am very pleased to speak to this bill. Having been the PA in agriculture, food and rural affairs, I was there when we introduced these regulations and have a great understanding of the details of how this happened.

I think it's important, as the minister noted, that helping farmers in Ontario needs to be a non-partisan exercise. We appreciate the nudging that we get on occasion from the other side when it's done in a productive sort of way. I see that happening now, and I'm delighted.

I love getting up to the member's riding. As you know, I like to get up there fly fishing once in a while, and I've had the pleasure to fly-fish in the Maitland. When I get up there and see those incredible fields of grain that are up there, I know that there are farmers doing great work in that neighbourhood.

In the minute I've got left, I want to just acknowledge how important pollinators are in my own riding. In my riding, I put in a whole bunch of boxes on the flankage of

my constituency association so we could plant. We called it the "create a green strategy." So I have all these planting boxes, which I planted with the local daycare. They came in and we planted pollinator flowers. We have a little bumblebee house there. It's spectacular.

I also took the pledge, the "Let It Bee" pledge, with Ontario Power Generation and Friends of the Earth. So I've got a really good understanding of how important—and it's not just the honeybees, as important as the honeybee is to honeybee production, but the 150 different varieties of bumblebees around the world. I'm particularly pleased that Mr. Anderson is here. I respect the great work you've done on pollinator habitat.

I, too, am trying in my own little way. We were going to put some honeybee hives on my mom's cottage up in Dorset until I was advised by an expert in the field, Sheila Colla, who said, "You know, you may not want to do that up there because the honeybee is probably going to displace a lot of bumblebees in the community. It's probably best to keep it natural and just plant more flowers," which we're actively doing. So I won't be able to produce at my mum's island, which we call Honey-moon Island. We won't be able to produce Honey-moon honey.

A passing reference: It's great to see Don McCabe here, as always. He's a great partner for helping us help farmers and grow Ontario up.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to stress the importance of Bill 4, Supporting Agricultural Experts in their Field Act. As the title suggests, experts and science-based expertise are crucial in determining crop applications, certainly not emotion.

During question period, we have asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs about the various challenges of seed treatment rules proposed in regulation 63/09. With the new rules, as we know, farmers would need a professional pest adviser to perform a pest assessment to determine if they can use neonic-treated seed.

Here's the crunch: Despite holding certified crop adviser credentials, advisers working with companies that sell neonic seeds are disqualified, leading, obviously, to a shortage of individuals to conduct these assessments that are required by the government.

With this reg, this government also, in my mind, seems to be questioning the professional integrity of these advisers, questioning their sound advice. These people have a reputation, as do the companies that provide these goods and services to farmers.

Speaker, this goes back to about a year ago. There's been a lot of debate, as you would know. Several of these agrologists have indicated that the ag minister misconstrued their words. It was about this time last year, after question period, when I asked the minister to rationalize—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I need to remind the member of parliamentary language. You have to withdraw what you just said.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw.

I will quote, then, to clarify this a little better. This is Minister Leal's answer to one of my questions, and again, he quotes: "It's not too difficult.' DeKalb agronomist Bob Thirlwall said the process isn't as onerous as some growers think. 'We've talked about it with a few growers: Is it any more work than the paperwork for having insecticide applied by airplane? We decided it's actually less work.'"

Continuing to quote, the minister said: "Ken Currah, a Pride agronomist: 'We are encouraging growers to have that discussion with their agronomist.' What acres need it?" What percentage can do without?

"This is what I'm hearing from grassroots farmers," Minister Leal said.

But after the minister indicated this in the Legislature, two of the agronomists took to Twitter. I will quote Ken Currah. His Twitter handle is @Ken_Currah. "@JeffLeal_MPP Not sure where you construe my comments re neonic reg paperwork as 'easy' as per your reply in QP yesterday to @TobyBarrettMPP."

Bob Thirlwall on Twitter: "@JeffLeal_MPP thks for the mention at QP but dont misinterpret my helping farmers as support for your unworkable regs @TobyBarrettMPP."

It was obvious then, in spite of Minister Leal's name-dropping—and we have words here like "misinterpret" and "construe;" I did withdraw the word "misconstrue"—that these changes were going to be difficult to implement.

Bill 4 offers alternatives, to its credit, and as outlined today by the minister—by the member. You'll be a minister someday, the member for Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson. We have some alternatives here, very specific to the issue at hand. I certainly welcome further discussion this afternoon. There are probably maybe four minutes left. I really look forward to discussion at committee. Let's pick a committee that has an open agenda and let's get this out for a fulsome discussion—not just on Twitter.

1600

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to be able to add a few words to the debate this afternoon. My comments are based on a couple of perspectives. The first one is the fact that I don't have hives and I don't plow and grow canola or soybeans, so I'm viewing this as kind of an outsider looking in. As an outsider looking in, it's clear to me that one needs to frame the comments that are made today with two simple facts: We need bees and we obviously need the grain.

Any efforts on this issue have to be based on science that everyone agrees with, that allows us to ensure that we end up having both the bees and the grains. I think the initiative that the member from Huron–Bruce has made is really an important one because of the fact that her comments are pretty well on the issue of making it work,

and the obstacles that currently exist from making the process work.

As she has indicated, the bill is intended to define a professional pest adviser. This will supersede the definition outlined in the regulations and pre-empt the exclusionary clause from taking effect. It would also establish a set of criteria that a director would have to consider when reviewing an application for status as a professional pest adviser. This would include education, experience and previous involvement. There are further details in terms of allowing students to conduct pest assessments independently; and also the issue around the number of crop advisers and the concerns that people have expressed with reducing the number of advisers from 538 to 80.

When I look at the last few moments of this debate, I would just want to end on a very positive note that we had from the comments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The recognition that I think everyone has displayed today is the fact that we need to approach this from a scientific base, with two clear beneficiaries: the bees and our food supply.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Huron–Bruce to wrap up this motion.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate all the comments that I've heard from my colleagues today in the House. I'm going to work backwards.

To the member from York–Simcoe: I really appreciate the fact that you nailed it. It's about the bees and about the grain. We have to "let it bee," to quote the member from Beaches–East York, and make sure we get regulations that are workable.

As the member from Northumberland–Quinte West pointed out, we had a tough summer this year. I was trying to remember—in the drought that we had, our front field of beans, because it was so dry, we were infested by a particular flea, so that we had to apply foliar spray on. We have to be careful about how we go forward. We can't take the tools that do the best job away from the farmer's toolbox.

I was reminded over and over again—and I appreciate the support from the federations of agriculture and the farming organizations in Huron and Bruce, because they too came forward with very eloquent messaging. I would be remiss if I didn't share it.

The Bruce County Federation of Agriculture said, "By eliminating the ability of CCAs employed by ag business from providing pest assessment services, it will leave a very small number of CCAs in Ontario eligible to provide the service.... With over four million acres of corn and soybeans in Ontario, that is not a workable situation." I'm glad the minister has indicated that he's willing to work and move forward into committee so we can get this right.

The Huron County Federation of Agriculture wrote to say, "The job of a CCA is extremely time sensitive, and limiting their employment opportunities would hinder Ontario agricultural production and research opportunities." They're spot on in that.

Professional agroloist Julie wrote, “I share the concern you express.... In order for the agriculture and food industry, critical to Ontario’s healthy people and economy, to not just survive but to thrive, the province needs to work quickly to find a way to remove ‘constrictions.’”

I think we’re going to do just that and I look forward to continuing this debate and dialogue in committee. Thanks for your support, everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

HAZEL McCALLION DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE HAZEL MCCALLION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mrs. Mangat. Mrs. Mangat has moved second reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Which committee would the member like to refer the bill to?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Madam Speaker, I would like to refer it to regulations and private bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Do we agree? I hear “agreed.”

Congratulations.

DRIVER LICENCES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. McDonnell has moved private member’s motion number 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear “carry.”

Motion agreed to.

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 D’APPUI AUX EXPERTS EN AGRICULTURE DANS LEUR DOMAINE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Thompson has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear “carry.”

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I’d like to hear from the member where the bill will be referred to.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: General government.

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

Congratulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Orders of the day.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know the wonderful constituents of Peterborough are turning on channel 95, Cogeco, in Peterborough. We want to move to government order G2, Madam Speaker.

ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 21, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I don’t know if I should say it’s a privilege to speak to Bill 2, but I will be speaking to Bill 2 today. I think it’s important that this House be engaged fully on the debate on Bill 2.

We heard from the minister yesterday in his leadoff debate that although it’s been tabled and we have the text of it, the minister intends on transforming the bill significantly at committee after second reading, if it’s passed—a very, might I say, unconventional statement. I’ll get into that a little bit later.

There are three elements of this bill that I think need to be sufficiently ventilated and discussed: (1) is what I would call the abuse of process that has gone on with Bill 2; (2) the cash-for-access elements which motivated and triggered the writing of Bill 2; and (3) the consequences should it be adopted, either in its present form or in the transformed form that the minister spoke of yesterday.

Let me just start off by saying this. We understand cash-for-access was the motivation here. We also understand that law, law-making, law-abiding and the rule of law require everybody to have a moral compass that can define and distinguish between right and wrong, that can define and distinguish between vice and virtue. We saw, during the cash-for-access scandal, that this government has no moral compass. If it does have a moral compass, it is spinning wildly out of control. Really, the only conscience that appears to be present is what is good for the Liberal government, what is good for the Liberal government coffers.

1610

Let me just go back to the process. I want to start by reading a short passage from a former Chief Justice of the High Court of Justice of Ontario, James McRuer. Now, just briefly: “The theory underlying democratic government is that when legislators make the law, the

rights of the individual will be safeguarded through public debate and public vote in the Legislature.” He goes on: “When the judges administer justice, the civil rights of the individual will be safeguarded by the independence and wisdom of the judges.”

Going back to that first part, the Chief Justice of the High Court of Justice spells it out, and it’s intuitive to all of us that public interest is safeguarded through debate. Of course, to debate, one must have the text of the legislation in front of them so they know what the debate is.

Here, we have heard from the minister yesterday that he plans to substantially transform this bill, not here at second reading but after second reading, after the bill has gone to committee hearings. And then, at the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, he plans on amending this. Now, of course, that precludes and prevents anybody in this Legislature from debating either the principles of the bill or the merits, if the text is not available—astonishing.

Now, keep in mind that this bill did go to first reading committee hearings. I commend the government for doing that, because at first reading committee, we had the opportunity to look at all aspects of election fundraising and bring in amendments. We had that opportunity. Amendments were put forward, amendments were adopted, and it was brought back. But prorogation happened in the intermission, and the government still brought back the amended bill from committee at first reading.

Now they’re saying, “Dismiss everything that the committee did at first reading. We’re going to bring in new, transformative and dramatic amendments beyond the debate at clause-by-clause considerations.” Speaker, this is, as I said, astonishing. I don’t know what words we can use.

But let me just go back, for all members’ understanding, to the House of Commons Procedure and Practice by O’Brien and Bosc, on page 712. I’ll read a few short passages for people’s understanding of the legislative process here that we’re engaged in.

“The examination and enactment of legislation are often regarded as the most significant task of Parliament”—the most significant. The examination and enactment—“examination” is a key word here.

“But what exactly is the legislative process? There are those who have defined it as a structured series of actions whereby a legislative proposal is examined”—once again, examined—“debated, sometimes amended and ultimately either rejected or proclaimed...”

How can we examine this bill if the texts as to the government’s principles are omitted from the bill? How can that happen?

It goes on: “In the Parliament of Canada, there is a clearly defined method for enacting legislation. This method is based on the examination of bills—formal legislative proposals that have been referred to by one authority.” The examination of bills: It is the great function of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I’ll go on a little bit more on this process, but just so we can be sure that I’m speaking with accuracy, I’d like to refer the members to Hansard yesterday morning, when the Attorney General spoke to this bill.

He goes on: “With this in mind, our government is prepared to take yet another extraordinary step. We plan to be the first jurisdiction in Canada to bar political candidates and MPPs outright from attending political fundraising events.” Is that in the bill? No, it’s not. It’s not in the bill.

“As I have already said, even the perception of a conflict of interest or of undue influence over a politician can weaken our democracy,” he goes on to say. So he’s going to take this extraordinary step. I continue to quote from Hansard, from the Attorney General: “While the reforms already in this bill would go a long way towards preserving the confidence of Ontario voters, over the summer our government came to realize that it just wasn’t enough.” There wasn’t enough in the bill. Now, they had the opportunity, at prorogation, to bring in these further amendments. They chose not to.

The Attorney General continues: “This is a dramatic and progressive change and we do want to be clear about its impact... We plan to introduce this measure in an amendment at the committee stage.”

We have the Attorney General’s own words that this bill is incomplete in his view—in the government’s view; in the executive’s view. This bill is incomplete, and they will introduce a completely new principle to the bill, of banning all candidates from attending fundraisers—well beyond the scope of the present bill, by any objective measure.

He goes on, because it’s not just banning fundraising and expanding the principle of this bill at second reading that the Attorney General plans on doing: “I would like to remind the colleagues of another set of proposed changes that are being planned” for Bill 2, “apart from the finance reform”—changes that he has already mentioned—“but in a very different way: by seeking to boost voter engagement and participation.” That’s not in the bill. There are no clauses about boosting voter participation and engagement.

He goes on: “Many of the changes we will be proposing address recommendations that were made by our Chief Electoral Officer as part of the review he does after every election.”

Once again, let’s go back to parliamentary convention, standing orders, the rules of debate. We must be able to examine before we can intelligently vote on a bill. This government, it appears, is purposely preventing us from examining the intentions because we can’t debate this. We can’t debate a phantom.

1620

I believe it is in the best interest of this government to reconsider what they’re planning on doing if they’re saying something different in Hansard from what they’re doing with Bill 2 in the text. I’m going to send a notice of intention to the Speaker, not only on how this is

unconventional with the standing orders but how it may also be a breach of our privilege, precluding us from discussing the principles and merits.

Another proposal that the Attorney General has said is that he plans to move the fixed election date from fall to spring. There is no mention of changing the election dates in Bill 2. How are we to actually debate what this government plans on doing?

Speaker, I'm going to just read one more element here. This is on page 728 of O'Brien and Bosc: "Since Confederation, the Chair has held that the introduction of bills that contain blank passages or that are in an imperfect shape is clearly contrary to the standing orders.... Although this provision exists mainly in contemplation of errors identified when a bill is introduced, members have brought such defects or anomalies to the attention of the Chair at various stages in the legislative process. In the past, the Speaker has directed that the order for second reading of certain bills be discharged, when it was discovered that they were not in their final form and were therefore not ready to be introduced." That's on page 728 of O'Brien and Bosc.

I say to this House, is this bill in its final form when the very mover of the bill, the Attorney General, says it isn't and when he says he's going to change it formatively?

I know that this will take some moments for the Speaker to consider and for the table to consider, but I would suggest that this bill is out of order based on the statements by the Attorney General. Something is not consistent here. There is a contradiction between a bill that is in its final form and the very mover of the bill who says that it is not in its final form.

Speaker, I would ask you to consider my request that this bill is out of order. I know that you'll probably want to take some time to reserve judgment, and I'll be happy to continue on my debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will recess the House for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1625 to 1635.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I would like to thank the member for his point of order. Firstly, the orderliness of the bill should be properly challenged prior to or at the commencement of debate on the bill. This is now the second day of debate on the bill, and the member himself has begun to participate.

I understand that the member now says that he has information that was not available earlier with respect to possible amendments to the bill. I would simply say that it is not at all uncommon for members on both sides of the House to indicate during second reading debate on a bill that they intend to bring forward amendments in committee. That appears to be the case here and is entirely consistent with normal practice.

I therefore find the bill is properly before the House and this debate is in order.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I will be filing a notice of privilege as well with your office today,

but I won't get into that right at the moment. I want to assure the Chair that this came to light during the leadoff debate yesterday morning when I thought I heard the Attorney General say certain things, but I had to wait to get the Hansard and verify that what I thought I heard was actually what I did hear.

But just to go on: On that process once again, Speaker, I want to make sure that everybody in the House is informed and knowledgeable that during first reading committee hearings on this bill, we had a number of exceptional professional individuals and people from all walks of life come to the committee hearings, make their deputations known, make their concerns on how the bill may affect them known. One of them was the Auditor General. Bonnie Lysyk was there and gave her deputation. She gave her comments.

Of course, what the Auditor General suggested that the Legislature should consider for Bill 201 at the time, now Bill 2, didn't make it into the amendment process. I'll just quote from Bonnie Lysyk's commentary: "Ontario's Liberal government would enjoy a 'political advantage' over rivals under Premier Kathleen Wynne's proposed campaign financing reforms, warns Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk."

An independent officer of the House made her presentations known. She also, of course, strongly recommended that government advertising fall back under her purview, her jurisdiction, under Bill 201, but the Liberal members of the committee unfortunately voted down the opposition amendments to include that jurisdiction for our Auditor General.

There's also another independent officer of the Legislature, David Wake, our Integrity Commissioner, who spoke at first reading committee hearings.

1640

It was interesting; the Integrity Commissioner expanded on a number of topics. One of them was one I didn't realize. As we were talking about cash-for-access and how the ministerial staff were being used to sell fundraising tickets to stakeholders and to people the government and those ministers do business with—often-times we heard that was a practice that was delegated off to their staff. Of course, the staff don't fall under the Members' Integrity Act, but they are captured in one little way. It was really mind-boggling when the Integrity Commissioner told us that if or when the Integrity Commissioner investigates the actions or activities of ministerial staff, the only consequence, the only remedy, is to inform the minister of the wrongdoing of their staff.

I'm going to paint a picture. It's very clear. The minister tells his staff to go out and engage in cash-for-access activities, go out and sell tickets to his stakeholders. Somebody complains to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner examines that. If he finds wrongdoing, he reports it back to the minister who directed the wrongdoing. There's no other remedy. There's no other consequence. It's astonishing. This is how this Liberal government has weaved and crafted the rules to shield themselves from the law.

We brought in amendments, and the Integrity Commissioner spoke to this. He said that we need to make changes to the integrity act. He also spoke of that famous meeting between our finance minister and then-Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli when they met with the host of banks that were involved in the selling of shares in Hydro One and where each of these banks paid \$10,000 to have an exclusive meeting with the two ministers involved. And David Wake said, "The law prevents me. The Members' Integrity Act prevents me from finding fault."

He says that perceived faults, perceived conflicts, potential conflicts are outside of his investigative powers. He can only investigate if he knows that there is real conflict. Of course, how can you find out if there's real conflict when nobody is allowed to lodge a complaint against that minister except for another MPP? It's amazing.

Those people who, some might say, are being shaken down for money on cash-for-access can't bring a complaint to the Integrity Commissioner. She or he has no mechanism to receive a complaint from the public or even to launch an investigation on his or her own accord. So even with this information that was widely circulated within the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* about this shakedown activity, the Integrity Commissioner says, "I can't do anything about it." The law shields and protects the minister from those investigations.

The Integrity Commissioner spoke, and amendments on that were struck down. The Auditor General spoke, and amendments on that were struck down, disregarded. But here we see this new one. To sort of deflect and take people's eyes off that scandalous cash-for-access behaviour, that cabinet without a moral compass—the Attorney General comes out and says, "We're going to prevent all MPPs, all candidates, from attending fundraisers."

Now, Speaker, I'm going to say, there was only one deputant to the committee who suggested that that was a reasonable alternative, that that was a reasonable recommendation for the committee to consider. I think it's important that this House understand who said that. It was the Communist Party of Canada that suggested that no fundraising be permitted and no attendance.

So, the independent officers of Parliament, their recommendations: Throw them away. The Integrity Commissioner's recommendations: Throw them away. But the Attorney General of this great province takes a recommendation from the Communist Party of Canada on our election financing reforms? Astonishing. Doesn't anybody find that astonishing? I do. I know the people of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington would be astonished to learn that the Attorney General believes the commentary and the examination and the recommendations of the Communist—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, standing orders, section 23(b): "Directs his or her speech to matters other than,

"(i) the question under discussion...."

If I wanted to get a history on the Communist Party, I may go to the Legislative library and look something up. We're implying motive here which is beyond the pale.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): It's okay. Thank you. I'm going to return to the member.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just so you know, I'm speaking about the legislative process on this bill. It's a matter of record. If the record of this bill is off-limits to the Liberal Party, then I can understand why they want what's in limits, what's not in the bill. They don't want us to talk about the text that isn't there, but they don't want us to talk about the text that is there. The committee heard those comments.

Let me now speak a little bit to the cash-for-access, just so that it is clearly—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a point of order from the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I just want to take this moment and take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Legislature who attended the International Plowing Match held this week in Wellington county. We were very delighted to have everyone there, and of course it continues for another couple of days. It continues right until—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I'm going to return to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills for that announcement. The International Plowing Match of course is continuing on in a strong, strong illustration of the strength of rural Ontario and the great individuals who make up our farming and agricultural communities at the plowing match.

Let me just speak a little bit to the cash-for-access. I did mention a little bit. Again, just so the Minister of Agriculture doesn't get confused, cash-for-access was the motivation. The Premier said herself that she needed to bring in this bill because of the—she said "perceived"—conflicts of interest. Others may have used different words other than "perception," but that was the motivation.

Let me just start here with a story from the *Globe and Mail*, July 25. The headline is: "Ontario Ministerial Aides Tapped to Sell Tickets to Fundraisers."

1650

"In some cases, staffers would tell stakeholders that a minister they wanted to meet with did not have the time to see them during regular business hours." I don't know what regular business hours are for ministers. I know my idea of regular business hours as an MPP is there are no regular business hours; it's all the time, every time. "But they could instead"—quoting from the story—"buy a ticket to a fundraiser and meet the minister there. The consequences to companies of not going was that their phone calls would not be returned and they would be treated more brusquely, some sources said.

“The practice of staffers raising money for the party is legal,” as I mentioned earlier, and even if it wasn’t legal, the remedy is to tell the person who told them to do it that they did it and hope that the minister would slap them on the wrist, I guess, or something to that effect, “and there is no indication that any of them used government resources for fundraising. Typically, they would use personal emails or mobile phones to contact potential donors.”

And we heard about this from John Gerretsen, the former Attorney General, when he was at the committee in Kingston, and it was a breath of fresh air. It’s always a breath of fresh air when you speak to a politician who is no longer in politics. But John Gerretsen—and I shouldn’t say that, because I found John always, always, to be a very upstanding Attorney General, as well as Minister of Municipal Affairs, among others, and quite a committed individual in serving the public. But he said, when talking about these quotas that Liberal ministers had to raise money, that he just left it up to the staff. Did those people get better access to him? He said, “Well, I don’t really know. You’d have to talk to my staff.” Did people get things that others didn’t? He says, “Well, you’d have to talk to staff, because they are the ones who sold the tickets. They’re the ones who booked the meetings.” But John Gerretsen said it’s time to get the big money out of politics. I agree. I agree with John Gerretsen more than I agree with the Communist Party of Canada. I agree with the Integrity Commissioner more than I agree with the Communist Party of Canada.

Speaker, here’s another one, again from the same article of July 25:

“One invitation, to a \$2,500-a-ticket cocktail reception”—I guess after hours—“on Nov. 30 last year for Michael Coteau, then the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, told donors to contact his director of stakeholder relations, Sara Alimardani,” to RSVP for these events. So no connection, except his employee. No connection.

There’s a host of these. I know they were concerning to the Premier, because we know that after seeing all these stories, she immediately one weekend got some napkins out and wrote up the Bill 201 legislation on some napkins at her kitchen table. Now we know the Attorney General wants to throw out that napkin and start afresh with a whole bunch of other stuff.

That reminds me: I should bring this up to the House as well. I had a technical briefing on this bill the other day, and of course, this is a bill by the Attorney General. That’s who has moved it; that’s who is the author of it, so we’re told. So my staff and I met with the technical briefing team on Bill 2, the Attorney General’s bill. Guess what? Maybe you’ll find this astonishing, maybe not. There was no representation from the Ministry of the Attorney General there. They were not providing the technical briefing. I said, “Who are you? You’re not from the Attorney General. Who is providing this briefing?” It was a staffer from the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. Of course, who’s the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs? The Premier.

I guess she didn’t like the first napkin and has come back with a new one as well and instructed the Attorney General to make these outrageous statements yesterday in the House—of circumventing due process, preventing and precluding members from examining the intentions of this government.

Fundraising is—and I could go on. Maybe I’ll do a few more things on these fundraisers. Again from the Globe and Mail story: “On the evening of March 2, 2015, Premier Kathleen Wynne gathered with eight guests who paid \$10,000 each for exclusive face time. Three months earlier, 22 donors spent \$5,000 apiece to be entertained by Finance Minister Charles Sousa.” Entertained by Charles Sousa: I know he’s a great entertainer but I personally wouldn’t pay \$5,000 to be entertained by the finance minister. Maybe they had something else they were looking for other than just entertainment.

That was also to attend a reception with Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli. It goes on—these were three of the more than 150 intimate cash-for-access fundraisers by the Ontario Liberal Party.

“The analysis reveals that attendees included construction firms with lucrative government infrastructure contracts, electricity companies with an interest in seeing the government continue outsourcing ... the province’s power generation, pharmaceutical corporations that depend on the province to list their drugs for coverage and,” of course, “the banks that made nearly \$60 million off the privatization of Hydro One.”

Fine entertainment; \$5,000, \$10,000 for some entertainment. These are pretty astonishing. Many of us in this House, when these revelations first came forward, thought there was justification for a public inquiry to the extent of what was going on. I still hold true and firm that belief, that we don’t really know what sort of entertainment was provided and that a public inquiry ought to be under way. I think those people who had to pay \$10,000 for face time with a member of cabinet ought to feel free to speak out and say what they felt, what they heard, what they saw, otherwise we just won’t know what happened behind those closed doors. But we know a public inquiry was not what the Premier was looking for. She was looking for some way to deflect this scandal.

Here’s a comment in here—and of course, I should emphasize this as well because we heard this throughout these revelations and we heard it again just the other day when I asked a question of the Premier about this recent high-powered, big-money fundraiser where no ministers attended, but her chief of staff attended. What was his name? The other one? Teliszewsky, the senior policy adviser for the Minister of Energy—they were there. A bunch of high-powered ministerial staff and chiefs of staff were there but no ministers.

What was clear in talking to those individuals who spent that big money: They were fearful to come forward and say when it happened, who was there. They were fearful that their contracts and their standing and their relationship with the government and doing business with the government would be threatened and jeopardized if

they came out of the woodpile; that if they came out and spoke, their businesses would be harmed; that their revenues would be diminished. That's a terrible, profound commentary on our society: when businesses who do business with the government are fearful of the relationship.

1700

I grew up—and I still have a firm belief that I will never fear government. Nobody should ever fear our government and what they will do. The only government I know of that one ought to be fearful of is a despot, a tyrant, a Communist. Those governments you should be fearful of. But a duly, properly elected representative democracy—people fear their government? What have we come to, Speaker? What have we come to, when people need to spend money to access their elected representatives and then are fearful to speak out in public for fear of consequences. I don't know how we've allowed our democracy to come to this state. I just don't know how it happened, but I know that all members of this House have an obligation to turn it around. We all have an obligation to turn this ship around and say to the people of Ontario, "We have a moral compass. We know the difference between vice and virtue. We will go with virtue, not vice. We know the difference between right and wrong, and we will legislate for right, not for wrong." We must all do that. But we're not going to get it with Bill 2 and these transformative changes that the Attorney General has stated he's going to bring in at clause-by-clause consideration.

I want to finish off, Speaker, with the consequences. I spoke about the motivations, the abuse, the cash for access. It's also important to speak of the consequences, whether intended or unintended. Again, we would be better off, we would most appropriately be able to evaluate the consequences if we could examine the text, but of course we can't. But from what the minister has said, what the Attorney General has said, both in this House and by way of press release, it is important for us to begin to consider, so let us think.

Elected members will be prevented from going to fundraising, whether they're \$5, whether they're \$50, whether they're with—every year I have a barbecue in my backyard. I've got an old place outside of town. I've got some acreage. I rent a tent and set up some barbecues, and a couple of hundred people come to my house, to my backyard and we cook up hamburgers. Will I be allowed to be in my backyard? I don't know. Listen, let me just be very clear. When I have the barbecue in my backyard, there is no demand that you must pay money. I'm opening up my home, my family's home, to be engaged with my constituents. If they want to leave some money behind for my campaign, they're more than welcome; I won't turn it away. But there is no cost to come. So am I not going to be allowed to have my constituents come to my backyard under this?

Just think of this: all MPPs. Now we also have heard, by way of press release, that this will also extend to candidates. Let's look at the candidates, somebody who,

like me 10 years ago, wanted to get into politics. I was an electrician. I didn't have a lot of money. I didn't have a network of Bay Street financiers in downtown Lanark county. The next Randy Hillier in Lanark county is not going to be able to raise funds.

How is that person going to raise funds if they are not allowed to go to a fundraiser? How are MPPs going to raise funds? Because we know the public subsidy that is included in Bill 2 only goes to the central party; \$2.71 per vote in the last election goes to the central party. What comes to the local campaign in the bill? Zero. Nothing comes to the MPPs. Nothing comes to the local riding associations. But \$2.71 will go to the party.

I don't know about you, Speaker—I think I do. I think everybody in in this House runs their own campaign. We buy our own signs. We print our own literature. We rent our own campaign offices. Some of us may buy radio advertising or print advertising. I don't know about everybody else, but the party doesn't pay for my campaign. Maybe they pay for Jeff's.

Hon. Jeff Leal: No, they don't.

Mr. Randy Hillier: They don't? Okay.

So what does that leave MPPs to do? Well, I know. I think that Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the former Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, said this in committee—or it may have been outside. He said, "If you leave a gap in this legislation, in my experience"—because he was Chief Electoral Officer for 20 years—"I know that these political parties are going to jam a Brink's truck through it without getting a scratch on it." That's what he said.

So let me ask, who will be able to go to the fundraisers if not ourselves? Proxies—proxies and bagmen. Instead of empowering members, instead of recognizing the value and the importance of members of this Legislature, this legislation will empower proxies and bagmen. They will be the only ones who can round up the money in the shadows and in the darkness and bring it to somebody. Is that what we want? Is that what we want for this Legislature, that there are people skulking around, acting as proxies and bagmen to finance our local campaigns or the campaigns of ministers? I hope not, but that's where we're heading to.

Of course, I can't say that with certainty because there is no text in the legislation to describe what the Attorney General wants—no text. But by way of debate-by-press-release, that's what we are left to assume.

1710

So I think we can all see that: that others will have to do that political fundraising instead of us. I'll have to call up somebody I know and ask them to bring the burgers and the barbecue over to my backyard while I'm not there one weekend.

But there's something else here, and I think it's important to emphasize this element as well. That is, does Bill 2 with its various transformative elements that are yet not completely known but are spoken about—will that not entrench the status quo? Will it prevent new blood, new parties, new candidates from entering into the public square of political debate?

Once again, the money, the public subsidy, the \$2.71 a vote, is going to the central party. Of course, as we know right at the moment, that will inherently be advantageous to the present Liberal government; they had the most votes. The official opposition will be next in line, then the third party. But what happens to the Green Party and the Family Coalition Party or the—I think we have 19 different parties in this province. What happens to those? They are prevented from engaging in a manner to raise funds and they're also disadvantaged by the per-vote subsidy.

Even an independent member, Speaker: What happens to an independent member who wants to come forward? There is nothing there for new ideas, for new blood, new resolve. Newness is disadvantaged. The status quo is entrenched. Is that what we want legislative reforms to accomplish?

When I and I think everybody here hears the term "reform," that doesn't give us a sense of entrenching the status quo, when we say we're going to reform the system. But that's what this bill is bringing: It's bringing an entrenching of the status quo under the guise of reform.

I do want all members of this House to consider what I've said today. I do want you to take a look at O'Brien and Bosc in your leisure, during regular hours or off hours. Maybe when you're sitting around having the ministerial staff sell stakeholder tickets, read O'Brien and Bosc. Read page 712. Read page 728. Read page 742. Read a few of those things. Then say to yourself, "Is the Attorney General acting in accordance with parliamentary law?"

Consider those comments that I've made on consequences. Do we want bagmen and proxies acting on our behalf? I don't. Politics ought to be and must be an honourable, trusting and noble profession that doesn't rely on intermediaries and proxies and bagmen for us to be here. We should be able to stand up and defend what we do and how we do it, and we should have a moral compass when we do so.

Speaker, I've mentioned this unconventional process that we're finding. I've asked you to consider things. I've asked the members of this House to consider: Is Bill 2 the shining white knight or is it just another cuddly, cute little puppy in the window to distract us from what we ought to be doing here? It's not a shiny white knight—not at all. It is a distraction, the way it has been presented.

I'll look forward, on behalf of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, to speak out on Bill 2, to raise those elements which I know to be less than admirable, in the hope that the Attorney General considers to withdraw this bill. Withdraw it; put the amendments in that he wants to see transform election financing. Let us examine his intentions. Let us evaluate the text, not by press release but by public debate. As Chief Justice McRuer said, the only way to safeguard the public's interest is through debate.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with great interest to the loquacious member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think, definitely, that the table and the Speaker ruled correctly in this instance, but he does make a profound point, and that is, in my 10 years of being here and serving, I've actually never seen a bill presented this way where amendments are discussed by the government side that aren't in the bill before the House and before debate. It's very unconventional. It strains, I do believe, the limits of due process here. I think the member was quite right to raise it as an issue, which you then ruled fits the letter of the law. But the question is—and I think the member raised it correctly: Is it the spirit of the way things should be done here?

We should be debating what the government intends to be the bill, and we're not. We're debating the first draft, and it's clearly a very rough draft because the amendments the government is speaking about substantially change the very nature of Bill 2. We haven't seen the amendments. If we can trust that the government is saying that the amendments are being put forward as they will appear on paper—again, we don't know. We don't have the facts.

One wonders about the reason for this debate. One wonders about the timetable that the government is operating on, and why we're having this particular debate at this time when we don't have all the facts at our disposal. So I want to commend the member for doing that.

He also raises a number of other interesting issues about the bill we do have in front of us, Bill 2. Again, hopefully that's not a waste of time, and I have 20 minutes coming up very shortly to talk about that.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the remarks this afternoon from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Basically, when you start looking at Bill 2, I think—the committee went across the province during this past summer. I certainly had chats with my good friend and colleague the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, who was on the committee. I think, generally speaking, as the federal government did a number of years ago when then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien decided it was time to fundamentally change the way parties in Ottawa would be raising money and he took corporate and union funding out of funding political parties in Ottawa—of course, Bill 2 brings some of that about.

1720

My understanding, Madam Speaker, is that we're not banning community events. MPPs will continue to be allowed to have community events. Consider the wonderful barbecue in the backyard at my home in Peterborough. For those who want to attend in late August, it's 501 Maniece Avenue, Peterborough, Ontario, K9L 0C1. For those who know Peterborough well, it's a stone's throw from the historic Peterborough Lift Lock. If they

want to come to the barbecue, I'll certainly give them a guided tour of the lift lock at exactly the same time. I can provide some insights.

I think that in many ways Bill 2 is a vital reform of political financing in the province of Ontario. We want to make sure, as we move forward—and there will be a lot of debate on this—that the rules on fundraising should apply equally to all political parties.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I haven't been here that long—about two and a half years. It's interesting, because politics involves so many different aspects. We are meeting with our constituents, we're meeting one on one, and then we're always thinking about that next election.

We shouldn't be. We really should be focused on the work that we're doing, that we're elected to do, for the time that we're here until that writ drops. It's really unfortunate to me to see what's going on, which is, from the day of the last election, we see a government party that is focused on how they can maintain their power and get themselves re-elected. They are fundraising. They have been accused by the major newspapers in Canada, including the *Globe and Mail*, of selling access to government contracts.

It's very interesting to learn from my colleague, the member from Frontenac-Lennox—I just want to get it right—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. It's very interesting, because I went to summer camp in his riding, right down the road from where he lives, so I can almost picture his backyard. I'm not sure which is his house, but I can almost picture his backyard.

It would be very unfortunate, I think, for political purposes, for regular MPPs to not be available at fundraisers to meet their constituents, because the fundraisers aren't just there for raising funds. We all know that it's kind of a community event and a community spirit, and very often for regular MPPs, especially in office, the fundraisers are an asked-for donation, not a demand for donation. You don't actually have to have a ticket to get into the member's backyard.

The minister responsible for seniors' affairs yelled out something before about sending somebody else to cover you if you can't be at the fundraiser. Well, that's very interesting to me, because what are we going to do, have lookalikes going to our fundraisers?

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always interesting to listen to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and particularly this time, because he brought up a lot of points that are very salient to this debate.

I question whether the government really understands the difference—or perhaps they understand the difference very well—between a \$10,000-a-plate fundraiser with a

minister who controls a ministry and an opposition member who holds a spaghetti dinner or a backyard barbecue. They seem to be trying to paint everything with the same brush, and the question is, why is that happening?

Is that, perchance, just a mistake? Is that an attempt to quell the perception of cash-for-access? There is not a shred of material evidence I heard echoed across the way, but there definitely is the perception. That is the issue that seems to be clouded. The issue that the member brought forward about what we're really debating—I've only been here five years, and I have to say that this is totally confusing, when the government proposes a bill and then says, "Oh, we've got a whole bunch of better stuff coming. We just aren't ready to talk about it yet."

Well, then, why are we bothering to debate? If they've got a bunch of better stuff coming, why don't they put it on the table instead of wasting everybody's time? Unless they're wasting everybody's time on purpose.

The committee went across the province. The government prorogued for a reset. No one would have been surprised if it had taken another month for Bill 2 so they could have actually put what they have waiting in the wings on the table. But now we've got Bill 2, and perhaps sometime we'll have—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members from Thornhill, Parkdale–High Park, Timiskaming, and of course the Minister of Agriculture.

I want to focus on this element: The confusion that was spoken of by the Minister of Agriculture speaks to my very point. He said that in his understanding, these things would be allowed. Let me just say here once again—because the Hansard says, "We plan to be the first jurisdiction in Canada to bar political candidates and MPPs outright..." That's what it says here. That's what the minister said. I know what he said here in Hansard is not in the text of Bill 2. Confusion must reign supreme when government is advancing legislation by way of press release rather than by way of text in the legislation. The bill is incomplete, without a doubt. It prevents us from examining the bill.

I want to just finish up on this one point. The government prorogued Parliament. It immediately killed all the bills. It killed Bill 201. They had the opportunity to bring in a revised and expanded bill with prorogation. Instead, they chose not to do that, but to expand the bill by way of press release.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to stand in this House—it's the first time since the summer break for me to debate a bill—and it's always an honour to represent the people of not only Parkdale–High Park, but in a sense, all of Ontario.

There's nothing that makes my voters, our voters, more apoplectic than the idea that—not that we live in a

democracy; they like that—those who they did democratically elect are actually not beholden to them, the average person, the person who goes in with the ballot and makes an X next to a name, but to a cabal, a group of individuals who have a lot of money and somehow have special access to the ministers of the realm. Nothing makes voters more apoplectic than that because it flies in the face of everything we think we know about a democracy. It really does fly in the face of everything we think we know about equality and access.

I think everybody knows there are lobbyists. We know that lobbyists come and ask for something from their elected members. We are all lobbied about something. But there's a very big difference between, say, Susan Gapka, a trans lobbyist on ODSP when she started out, who knocks on the door of everyone in this place and tries to put trans rights before them on no money, and a head of a bank who pays \$10,000 to have access to a specific government minister who specifically controls the finance for their particular industry and can award them with contracts and can make them and does make them money. There's a very big difference, just as I think most voters get that there's a very big difference—and members have alluded to this—between a \$50-a-head spaghetti dinner night fundraiser and a \$10,000-a-head night in a swanky restaurant, where only 10 people get to sit down with the Premier of the province and some key ministers around issues that actually will make a very big difference in everyone around that table's pocketbook. There's a very big difference.

If we want to know where that sort of fundraising is headed, we just have to look south of the border, which is engaged in the election now that will be won by people with the most money, among other things. When you look at the way their members of Congress have to raise money, it's a very, very, very telling tale about where we do not want to go.

1730

Interestingly enough, members of Congress have to fundraise about \$18,000 a day—\$18,000 a day.

Mr. John Vanthof: You forgot to stand down the lead.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Oh, and my House leader just mentioned we are standing down the lead, just to let you know—

Mr. John Vanthof: We have to have unanimous consent.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —and unanimous consent for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Do we have unanimous consent for the member from Parkdale–High Park? I hear a yes. Thank you.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, because nobody wants to sit here for an extra half an hour after 6 o'clock, Madam Speaker.

South of the border, members of Congress have to raise about \$18,000 a day—about \$2 million in their first month of election. Senators spend a third of their time every day fundraising. In fact, the article I was reading

about this said, “Are we asking our political representatives to be telemarketers?” Because that's essentially what they do. Every day they're on the phone, phoning through a list, trying to get money just to keep their jobs. I don't think we want that. I don't think we want to go there.

That's why Martin Regg Cohn wrote the article that set this all in motion. So let's give credit where credit is due, because it was, after all, his article that pointed to what was going on. It was a surprise, I have to admit, certainly to some backbench members of the government, never mind folk in the opposition, to understand what was happening across the aisle, that cabinet ministers were expected to raise \$250,000, \$500,000 as part of their portfolio. That's onerous. I feel tired just saying those figures.

That's an onerous debt to put on someone, just to sit at the cabinet table, and we didn't know that. I didn't know that. Martin Regg did know that, found it out and put it forth in this article.

He talked about the \$3 million that was made in one single night at the Heritage Dinner by the Liberal Party. He was talking about “victory tables” priced at \$18,000 for what he called corporate high-flyers.

He talked about financial targets, as I said, of \$250,000 to \$500,000 that was the admission price to the cabinet table. He talked about Charles Sousa, the Minister of Finance, and Eric Hoskins, heading up health, the province's \$52-billion health care budget, who were the targets of much lobbying, one can suspect, and were expected to raise about half a million dollars—not American amounts, of course, but still significant: \$250,000, \$500,000. I don't think voters knew that. We didn't know that. I don't think most of us knew that.

Again, he's talking about specific people with specific aims. Their aims are not to add trans rights to the Ontario Human Rights Code. Their aims are, quite frankly, to make more money in their companies and in their industries.

For example, he talks about, and other members have alluded to this, Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli, who's “among the most reliable fundraisers”—\$250,000 or \$300,000 a year, apparently, he makes; again, didn't know it—“tasked with tapping into the massive nuclear and electricity sectors that have billions of dollars in annual cash flow. Hence his ability,” says Martin, “to raise a remarkable \$100,000 in a single evening (with [Premier] Wynne at his side) when Bruce Power brought together a dozen supporters for”—and these are his words—“a cozy Yorkville dinner, as first reported ... in 2013.” That's significant because Bruce Power and others stand to gain substantial rewards from this very minister.

None other than John Gerretsen—and quite frankly, shout-outs to John Gerretsen, who apparently appeared before the committee and supported some of the New Democratic Party amendments. He was actually one of the whistle-blowers in this. I remember him as the housing minister when I was first elected and had that

portfolio. He says, “I hated the whole aspect of fundraising.” No kidding. “If a major issue comes up, and you have been funded by lobbyists on behalf of any kind of industry, you’re going to be affected by that ... it’s human nature.” No kidding it’s human nature. If you’re responsible for raising \$500,000 in your term as cabinet minister, and somebody’s willing to give you \$100,000, they’re going to get your ear, or else you might not get your position. This makes voters crazy, Madam Speaker. Do we not get that in this House? This makes them crazy, because they see it for what it is. Of course, this is what it is.

Let’s look at a specific example here. We had an instance where GreenField, the biggest corporate donor to the Ontario Liberals since Kathleen Wynne became Premier in 2013, donated more than—and listen to this—\$480,000 to the Ontario Liberal Party. But it turns out to be a good investment. Hey, I have nothing against business—I was in business at one point in my life—but look at this. Look at the return on this investment: \$480,000 that they invested in the Ontario Liberal Party, and they received back \$160 million in government support. I’d say that’s a good return on investment; \$480,000 sounds like a lot of money, but if you get \$160 million back, that’s not a bad investment at all. Actually, that was the single biggest one, but it’s significant over the years. So if \$480,000 gets you \$160 million, I would pay. Honestly, it’s good business to pay the \$10,000 to get that seat.

Here’s the weird thing. I could go through—I’m already running out of time—all of the donors to the Liberal Party, and you’ll see this correlation between amount given and amount received. There is a correlation. It does exist. It’s an investment. They make an investment in a cabinet minister. The difference between coming to a \$50-a-head spaghetti dinner for an opposition member or even a backbench Liberal and actually “cozying up”—Martin Regg Cohn’s words—in a Yorkville restaurant for \$10,000 is that you get something back from that.

We, Madam Speaker, don’t have anything to give. We don’t have anything to give but our voices and our ability to work hard and bring those sentiments into this august place. But they have money, and money is what we’re talking about—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just want to remind the member. You’re very close, so be very careful with the choice of words. I just want to remind the member.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I thank you for that warning, Madam Speaker. You’re doing your job, and that’s good.

Here we have a very distinct correlation on one side that is undeniable. It has not been denied and, in fact, it has been pointed out not just by the Toronto Star but by the Globe and Mail and Toronto Sun as well, and other publications. Really, everyone has said exactly the same things. That’s what’s going on.

Then we get Bill 2. Bill 2 is supposed to remedy what was originally pointed out by the Toronto Star and

Martin Regg Cohn, that there’s something undesirable and something that would make most voters flinch about cash for access—that’s the term that was used—to cabinet ministers who control the purse strings of an industry you happen to represent.

We were absolutely within our parameters to expect that Bill 2 would address that and that in Bill 2 we would see that cash-for-access would exist no more. But the sad reality is, it still does. Even the amendments that the government talked about, which we can’t debate because they’re not here yet, don’t address that.

MPPs attending fundraisers: It doesn’t address that. If one can give a donation, it doesn’t have to be the cabinet minister in the room. A donation directly affecting and get directly affected back: This does not affect it, and that was the whole point. Wasn’t that the whole point? It was to bring down, of course, the amount of donations individuals can give. It was to ban union and corporate donations—good thing. We have always supported that in the New Democratic Party. It has always been a part of our policy to ban union and corporate donations. Mind you, I would want to make a difference between a union—just an association of workers—and a corporation, which is a profit-driven enterprise. There is a difference there. But we’ve always had it as part of our policy—no problem there.

1740

But we all know that individual donations can still come from folk in unions and folk in corporations. Now all of a sudden, we have individual donations—will that really change cash-for-access? We hope it will. Voters hope it will. But honestly, I doubt it.

I couldn’t help but think of my favourite poet, T.S. Eliot. Not talking about government process, he said:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

Absolutely—and we see a lot of shadow falling in this place.

The idea: Control cash-for-access. The reality: It’s not going to affect it. The idea, the hope of everyone, including those in the fourth estate, that somehow we’re going to change the way politics is done in this province with this bill, Bill 2, even with its amendments—and the reality? Not so much. Because one thing that hasn’t been mentioned, or at least I haven’t heard it in this debate so far, is advertising, for example. There will be limits on advertising—I think it’s a million dollars for parties. However, the government gets to spend \$40 million in advertising on behalf of the Ontario government, which of course our wonderful Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, pointed out as being problematic. Yes, it’s problematic. Third-party advertising: Yes, there were some problems there and we needed to do something about it. But this is going to effectively shut the mouths of, for example,

parents who want to fight for more effective help for their children with autism. It's going to shut their mouths. But the government can still keep talking about how wonderful it is, using taxpayers' dollars that will not be covered by this legislation and will not even be covered by her, so she will not be able to rule on it. That's also part of Bill 2.

So really, what do we have here? Again, we have—and it has been alluded to—a public relations exercise, because all of the amendments, which we haven't seen, which we haven't been able to read and hence cannot really debate—what we have here in black and white in Bill 2 is clearly inadequate, clearly not up for what I think our friends, again, in the fourth estate—who are doing their job, holding all of our feet to the fire. They're asking for transparency. They're asking for openness. They're asking for an end to cash for access, an end to undue influence by some parties on those who have the money to award undue access, which would not be allowed in many organizations, undue access to those holding the purse strings. That's not going to change with this. That's the sadness of it. That's the shadow here. That's a shadow between what we all hoped for and I think what we all want to achieve—I really do—and what we'll actually get.

What we'll actually get, again, says our wonderful Auditor General and others, is even more of an edge given to the Liberal Party, which I don't think was Martin Regg Cohn's idea in writing that article that clearly pushed the government along this path. I don't think it was Mike Crawley's idea, writing for the CBC. I really don't think it was their hope, in this piece of legislation, that what we would get is more of the same under a new guise, in a new costume. That's essentially what we will get.

If the government is allowed to spend \$40 million, which they did, on advertising about how wonderful they are, which we're already hearing, and the opposition is not allowed to spend more than X amount, depending on what the amendments bring in, that's not fair. If ministers are still allowed, through their proxies, through their chiefs of staff, through others, to get folk to give them money in the hopes of getting something in return—cash-for-access, the original problem—that's not fair either. If we are all hampered from holding a spaghetti dinner for \$50 a head in our backyards because of what they've done, that's not fair either. I think our voters, I think those who sent us here, who elected us here, who get, as I said at the beginning, apoplectic about the idea that there are special interests that have more of the government's ear than they do, even though there are more of them, way more of them than those who can afford the \$18,000 tables, way more of them—even if the individual contribution rate comes down, we'll see a whole lot of individuals, I imagine, many of them, one might suspect, GreenField employees, for example. Do we really believe that that's going to change?

I think my voters don't really believe it's going to change. My voters and the people I speak to and the people we speak to, I don't think they really think that

this Bill 2, even with the proposed amendments—people like John Gerretsen, the whistle-blower Attorney General and Minister of Housing, among many other portfolios that he had, who came forward and actually supported some of the New Democratic Party's amendments: I don't think he thinks that this bill, even with its amendments, will get the job done. That's sad because we do need that job to get done. We do.

Martin Regg Cohn, when he wrote that article, saw a problem and highlighted it, as is his job. Mike Crawley saw a problem and highlighted it; that's his job. The fourth estate has done its job and now the voters are looking to us, and what they're seeing in Bill 2 is not what needs to get done, even with the amendments.

I've got 29 seconds in which to convey my voters to this government and to say that since this is a not-done deal, clearly, since there are lots of amendments coming forward, please, please, take this opportunity to get the job done right, to actually change cash-for-access, to actually change the way political advertising and fundraising is done and, finally, not just in the PR sense, not just in the spirit of the law but the letter of the law, make it fair.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly about this bill for a couple of minutes. There are a number of features of this that have been discussed previously, including lowering contribution limits, providing a clear definition of third-party advertising, strengthening limits for government advertising before an election, and we propose working with all parties to develop a code of conduct.

There is one part of this that's not being discussed that I want to mention that and I'm very supportive of, and that is, there are amendments to ban fundraising events for nomination contestants. A lot of people don't know who nomination contestants are. I didn't know who these people were until I got involved politically. To be frank, I was surprised there weren't any rules to speak of around running a contested nomination.

A contested nomination is when more than one person wants to run as a candidate for a particular party. In my case, there were six of us on a contested ballot. I was completely new to the process. There are a lot of rules in government, of course, once you get into government, but when you're a nomination candidate to run to be the MPP for your party, you have to have that mini-campaign in the context of a contested nomination. I think having strong rules around that is important. It's fair to support the democratic process. It evens the playing field. Let's face it: Some contested nomination candidates have more resources than others, and that doesn't seem right. I've been very, very strong about supporting these changes for nomination candidates.

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

1750

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the remarks from the member for Parkdale—High

Park and a number of the issues that she pointed out in the bill; as well as the previous speaker from our caucus, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, about the shortcomings on this bill, the issues that are going to be raised and the concerns we have with a procedure that the Attorney General has moved forward with in the way this bill has been addressed. He talked about amendments that they're going to make and bring forward in this unusual way, according to the two speakers.

I have concerns as well, because I'm wondering how this new fundraising setup is going to work for the local members and private members who are from rural ridings that have traditionally done, as someone said, a spaghetti dinner, a turkey fundraiser or other events like that. Are they going to impact those people's ability to raise money? Because that's how we do finance our campaigns. We don't have access to the large fundraisers that have been alleged to have taken place in the past and which have certainly helped finance all three parties, but certainly one party to more of an advantage than the others.

So while we agree that there needed to be something done, we're not sure what the government is proposing in this respect. I think one of my colleagues said that perhaps a better way to have handled this would have been to have taken three retired members from all three parties—the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP—have those three former members who had been through the process come forward with some recommendations that the committee, at that time, could have taken a look at. It probably would have made a lot more sense than something that has been drafted, it looks like, in the backrooms and that, I think, at the end of the day, won't be satisfactory.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for the opportunity to be able to make a few comments on my colleague from Parkdale–High Park on Bill 2.

One of the things that struck me the most is that the origin of this issue was media reports about fundraising quotas that ministers had to attain. Now, I'm a dairy farmer; I understand quotas. You have to work hard to fill your quota. You buy feed from the right places and do all of these things to fill your quota. As soon as I hear that someone has to fill a quota, the perception that I feel is that filling that quota might not necessarily be in the public interest. Because the quota isn't for the public; the quota you're filling is for the party. You are fulfilling a job that should be in the public interest, but you are being forced to choose between your interests. That's what those articles brought forward.

I think that is a big reason for this bill, but the same issues aren't really addressed by this bill, because the quota could still be there. It could be filled, as the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said, by a proxy. The quota is still there, and that's a big problem with this bill.

This bill is painting everything with a big wide brush to cover up the blemishes that are in some parts of the system. It would be much better if it actually looked at making the system fairer for the people of Ontario.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm also pleased to rise and respond to the comments originally made by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I was very curious, because one of the words that the member used to describe the bill was “inadequate.” I was a little intrigued by that, because very recently I was in Vancouver for a federal-provincial-territorial meeting. There were ministers from all of the provinces and territories in Canada, and they were all so complimentary of Ontario as to how far we were going and how bold we were with some of the fundraising changes that we're proposing. So I'm just a little surprised that the member would say that it's inadequate.

The second thing I found was that the basic premise of her argument against the bill is that people will break the rules. “These rules that you are proposing are no good because people will find a way to break the rules.” But that would be the case with any legislation that we propose, because you could say, “All these rules are great, but what about all the people who are going to break the rules or find ways around them?” The basic premise that I heard over and over again was, “This doesn't work because somehow donors and MPPs are going to find a way around it and people are still going to do cash-for-access.”

That basic premise is wrong. You can't criticize legislation on the assumption that somehow people are going to break the rules. We make the rules and we expect Ontarians to follow the rules. As legislators, first and foremost, we have to uphold the rules. I think we should go forward on this bill and argue this on the basis that people will follow the rules and not assume from the get-go that people are going to get around the rules that we are proposing.

If we assume that people are going to follow the rules, because that's what good Ontarians do, I believe this is a good bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I will return to the member from Parkdale–High Park to wrap up.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all who weighed in. To the Minister without Portfolio, the problem is the rules aren't there. The rules that you have in Bill 2 still allow cash-for-access and still allow the government to spend way more than opposition parties on advertising. This is from the Auditor General; I didn't make this stuff up.

Really, one should read her analysis—not only hers, but David Wake's, who is the Ontario Integrity Commissioner, who said that banning cash-for-access was the reason for this bill, but it's not in the bill. My appeal to the government is put it in there. Make the rules the rules. It's not about breaking them; make the rules the rules.

Listen, the Minister of Health has joined us. I'm a fan of the Minister of Health. I don't know the Minister of Finance as well, but he seems like a nice man. We in the New Democratic Party just want to make their lives, and all the cabinet members' lives, easier. To have to raise \$500,000—that's onerous. That should not be part of what it takes to sit at the cabinet table. We think cabinet members should be chosen because of their abilities and their strengths, not because they're good telemarketers or good fundraisers. That should not be what gets you to the cabinet table.

We in the New Democratic Party are working hard for the members of the Liberal cabinet to really relieve them

of this undue stress. To have to raise \$250,000 to \$500,000 isn't fair. We're doing our civic duty over here. I would simply say that most of our voters would say it's not fair, either.

Again, they shouldn't have to do that. The Liberal Party shouldn't make them do that. We should have a system that's fair, where the rules are clear and, yes, where we follow the rules.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it's almost 6 o'clock, I will be adjourning the House. It resumes on Monday, September 26 at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
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Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Mantha, Michael (NDP) Martins, Cristina (LIB) Martow, Gila (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin Davenport Thornhill London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
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McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC) Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB) Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Etobicoke–Lakeshore Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
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