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Wednesday 17 April 2013

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(Hansard)**

Mercredi 17 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION
ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION
DU CANCER DE LA PEAU
(LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments / *Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet.*

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments. Before I begin, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

To start off, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this bill over the past few years, starting with the member from Nickel Belt, who has brought it forward on several occasions and who has been relentless in her pursuit of safe tanning practices. I think she really is to be congratulated on this bill coming forward as a government bill.

I would also like to welcome Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society, who are in the gallery to be part of this debate and to listen to the comments here today. Thank you so much for joining us. The Canadian Cancer Society has been tirelessly advocating for the safe use of tanning beds for more than seven years. Their efforts deserve to be recognized and applauded, and I'm pleased that we are finally taking action to promote the safe and appropriate use of tanning beds in this province.

Bill 30 is a measure to respond to the mounting scientific evidence that points to the known dangers associated with using tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatments for youth. The World Health Organization has

identified tanning beds as a known carcinogen. Previously, tanning beds were considered a probable carcinogen, but in 2009, the World Health Organization upgraded tanning beds from probable carcinogens to known carcinogens, based on scientific evidence. This puts tanning bed use in the highest risk category along with asbestos and tobacco.

Bill 30, which will restrict access to indoor tanning equipment for youth under 18, is consistent with existing regulation on minors' access to other harmful substances, like tobacco. These restrictions recognize that youth are less likely to consider long-term health consequences of their actions, and this is especially relevant to indoor tanning because skin cancer resulting from indoor tanning equipment can take years to develop.

Mr. Speaker, I can certainly say from personal experience that in my youth we weren't aware of the dangers associated with excess tanning. I'm glad that we know this information now, and that we are taking these types of precautions. Dr. Samir Gupta, chair of the Ontario Medical Association's dermatology section, states, "The evidence has been unequivocal over the last several years that tanning bed radiation is linked to skin cancer," and it's the sun exposure you are getting in your early years that predicts skin cancer later on.

What does Bill 30 contain? In addition to restricting access to indoor tanning equipment for youth, Bill 30 has several other provisions. The bill requires tanning bed operators to request identification from people who appear to be under 25. This is certainly consistent with the laws on tobacco sales, which stipulate that tobacco cannot be sold to a person who appears to be under 25 unless that person produces identification indicating that they are of majority age.

Bill 30 would also ban advertising and marketing of tanning services or ultraviolet light treatment to youth under 18. Further, Bill 30 requires tanning bed owners to post signs about the ban and the health risks associated with the use of tanning beds. To give teeth to this regulation, Bill 30 authorizes inspectors to enforce these regulations. Tanning bed operators who fail to comply with the legislation will face fines. Fines are set at \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations.

Finally, Bill 30 requires that all tanning bed operators provide the local medical officer of health with the name, business address and telephone number where the tanning service or ultraviolet light treatment is being sold. The province needs a registry of tanning equipment operators so that, if passed, this legislation can be overseen and enforced.

Bill 30 comes in response to studies by health researchers that have made the risks of using tanning beds abundantly clear, especially for youth. The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer reports that the risk of skin cancer, particularly melanoma, increases by 75% when tanning beds are used prior to the age of 35. Researchers have found that the risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, increases by 1.8% with each additional tanning session per year.

This is worrying, because we are witnessing the impact on the health of Ontarians. The incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in youth and adults aged 15 to 34. At the same time as we see increasing cases of melanoma among youth, we see a rise in the use of tanning beds. A study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society showed that between 2006 and 2012 the use of tanning beds more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, among Ontario students in grades 11 and 12. Skin cancer is now the most common cancer in Ontario. It accounts for one third of all cancer diagnoses in the province.

The research is clear that the main environmental risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and also through indoor tanning. It's important to clarify that exposure to ultraviolet rays is linked to skin cancer whether the ultraviolet rays are from the sun or from tanning beds. In fact, UV rays from tanning beds can be even more harmful than UV rays from the sun. I don't think this is something that people really recognize, Mr. Speaker.

Studies of modern tanning equipment have found ultraviolet emissions equal to or exceeding those of the midday sun in the Mediterranean. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, some tanning beds can expose you to five times more radiation than the sun; again, a pretty startling statistic. However, many youth have false conceptions about tanning beds. According to an Ipsos Reid poll, 12% of youth believe that using tanning beds or lamps actually helps prevent some kinds of cancer and nearly 20% say they use a tanning bed or lamp because it increases their vitamin D levels. In reality, there are many other ways of getting vitamin D without the risks that accompany the use of tanning beds; for instance, through safe exposure to the sun or by taking supplements such as liquid vitamin D drops.

So why do youth use tanning beds? According to a study by the Canadian Cancer Society, the main reasons students give for using tanning beds are (1) feeling that they look better with a tan; (2) getting a tan before going on vacation or for special occasions—I think it's probably around prom season that we see a particular use, or the highest use, of tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatments; and (3) because of peer influence.

0910

A Toronto health survey tells us that in Toronto, indoor tanning use is highest among young white women aged 18 to 34, 44% of whom have used indoor tanning at some point in their lives, and we know that more than one in five people start using tanning equipment when they are

under 18 years of age. So a ban, I would say, in this case is certainly appropriate.

To look out for our youth's best interests, we must appropriately address the products and services that put youth at considerable risk. I would say, as Progressive Conservatives, that we don't necessarily believe in bans just for the sake of it, but in this case, there's certainly significant scientific evidence that directly links the use of indoor tanning and some forms of skin cancer. What we're talking about here when we're talking about youth as opposed to adults is that there is certainly evidence that links skin cancer—specifically, linking melanoma—to tanning beds. It undeniably points to a need to regulate tanning bed use for youth under 18.

The state recognizes that youth may be less likely to consider the long-term health consequences of their actions, and there are provisions in law which bind the state to protect youth and others who are not capable of caring for themselves or making these types of decisions for themselves. In law, the *parens patriae* power gives the state the power to make decisions concerning people who are not able to take care of themselves or to make those kinds of decisions on their own. In the case of *Rutherford v. Ontario*, the court found that “the *parens patriae* jurisdiction is ... founded on necessity, namely the need to act for the protection of those who cannot care for themselves. The courts have frequently stated that it is to be exercised in the best interest of the protected person....”

We see other examples of this—for example, in the work of the children's aid society. The children's aid society has the power to intervene in families to prevent child abuse and neglect. Similarly, when there is a known danger to youth, as is the case with tanning beds and UV radiation, it is necessary from time to time for the state to step in to keep our youth healthy, and that's certainly what Bill 30 is aimed at doing.

I would like to speak just briefly about one individual person's contact with tanning beds and her personal health situation that arose as a result of that. One brave young woman who has appeared in this Legislature before—her name is Kate Neale—used to be a frequent tanner. She is now a Canadian Cancer Society volunteer and a fantastic advocate against youth using tanning beds. Kate started using tanning beds when she was a 16-year-old with light and sunburn-prone skin. At first, Kate tanned two or three times a week but soon started doing 12 to 16 minutes in the highest UVB-pressure bed up to 16 times a month. The maximum recommended time on this bed is 12 minutes, but the salon allowed customers to tan in this bed for up to 30 minutes.

After graduating from high school, Kate applied to work at a tanning salon. Her contract stipulated that in return for maintaining a tanned appearance, she would get 12 indoor tanning sessions and one spray tan free each month.

In May 2011, at age 21, Kate was diagnosed with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Kate's surgeon told her that she was the youngest person he had ever treated for melanoma. Removing the melanoma has left a

six-inch scar on Kate's stomach. Since her first surgery, she has had to undergo biopsies for skin lesions on her right breast, leg and arm. Despite her experience, Kate says she is still using self-tanners, or self-tanning spray or lotion, because she still wants to maintain that tanned appearance, but she's still fighting skin cancer. New spots appear on her skin regularly. Currently, Kate is waiting for the results of another biopsy, which left her with 22 stitches on her left breast, and a total of eight spots have been removed since June, one being precancerous.

Kate's experience has led her to educate teenagers about the dangers of indoor tanning and encourage them to host tan-free proms. She's also a strong advocate for the need to regulate the indoor tanning industry. Kate says, "If politicians need a reason to take action on this issue, they should just take a look at my story to see how tanning at a young age has impacted my life." I hope that any young people who may be either listening to this or may hear about it will take these words to heart, because of course all young people think that this sort of thing will never happen to them, but Kate's experience certainly shows that it can happen to a young person. I thank her very much for her bravery in coming forward with her story.

Unfortunately, her story is powerful but all too common. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ontario. In 2011, an estimated 36,160 new cases of skin cancer were diagnosed in the province, of which 2,500, or 7%, were melanoma. Melanoma caused an estimated 420 deaths in Ontario in 2011.

Tanning bed use is undeniably costly to individuals' personal health and well-being, but of course the financial cost to our health system is also extremely high. I'd just like to address that for a few moments. Cancer Care Ontario estimated that the cost of skin cancer in this province would exceed \$344 million in 2011. This includes direct costs like the cost of treatment, as well as indirect costs of morbidity and premature mortality. This is a significant burden on our already strained health care system.

The good news is that this is a cost which we can take steps to minimize. Skin cancer is largely a preventable disease. Promoting the safe use of tanning beds is one way to minimize the risk of skin cancer, and this relates fundamentally to our Progressive Conservative vision for health care. Our vision for health care is based on health promotion and health prevention, rather than our old model of health care which is reactive, based on acute episodes of illness and only responds in times of crisis. What we really want to do in our health care system is transition to a model which is based on promotion and prevention, which is proactive and which exposes people to knowledge about how to prevent these types of diseases in the future and to maintain high-quality health care. Bill 30 provides a way to improve the health of Ontarians and takes steps towards reducing the burden on our health care system.

The current standard for the indoor tanning industry is self-regulation, but this has proven to be insufficient. The

Joint Canadian Tanning Association, or JCTA, has developed guidelines for tanning facilities. These voluntary guidelines include regulations about operator training and certification, restriction of equipment control to certified operators and requirements for written parental consent for clients under age 18, but these industry guidelines are not enforced, and the JCTA does not represent all indoor tanning facilities.

At present, studies show that indoor tanning facilities provide only limited information to their customers about the health risks of indoor tanning. Many people, including youth and fair-skinned individuals, continue to be at risk of skin cancer from indoor tanning. This was proven in 2007, when Youthography conducted a compliance audit for the Ontario branch of the Canadian Cancer Society. Research assistants, including youth as young as 16, were trained to act as indoor tanning customers. The study looked at 79 tanning bed salons in Toronto and found that the majority, in fact 83% of those facilities, did not provide information about the skin cancer risks associated with indoor tanning bed use. Moreover, 60% of facilities did not ask for the age of the young researchers. This study suggests a failure of the current self-regulatory model.

Moreover, in 2011, Toronto Public Health conducted a review of the websites of indoor tanning facilities in Toronto to determine whether their practices were consistent with Health Canada's guidelines for tanning salon owners, operators and users. Websites are considered an important source of information for indoor tanning customers looking for a local business. Toronto Public Health found that only one third of the websites for tanning salons provide information about the health risks of indoor tanning to the consumer and to the public; only two websites provided information about the increased risks of skin cancer; and none of the websites advised young people not to use tanning equipment.

0920

The Toronto Public Health website analysis also examined the marketing and advertising messages used to promote indoor tanning services. The most common theme—a claim made on 43% of the websites—was that indoor tanning is "safe" compared to tanning outdoors. A third of the websites identified benefits related to vitamin D production, and just under 20% of websites promoted health benefits such as improving mental health, preventing chronic disease, decreasing risk of cancer, and improving skin conditions. It's no wonder that youth have a number of misconceptions about the use of indoor tanning beds. These misleading promotional messages need to be addressed so that youth and all Ontarians are properly aware of the actual risks of indoor tanning.

These studies lead us to conclude that industry self-regulation is not effective and that we need to do more. The Joint Canadian Tanning Association once advocated for requiring parental consent for youth to use tanning beds rather than a ban against youth accessing tanning equipment. But the JCTA does not oppose age-based restrictions in Bill 30, and the JCTA recognizes the im-

portance of regulating the indoor tanning sector. Further, the JCTA has pointed to several areas where Bill 30 could be strengthened, and this advice is certainly most welcome. The JCTA recognizes that if we are going to regulate the use of tanning beds available to youth, we need to do so effectively.

Bill 30 falls short because it does not include a ban on self-service coin-operated machines. Although self-service tanning is not yet common in Canada, it is common in England and a number of other international jurisdictions, and it is becoming increasingly common in Ontario. Coin- or swipe-card-operated franchises offer low-cost, unsupervised tanning services. These self-serve tanning beds lack professional control over UV light exposure, putting clients of all ages at risk and giving youth access to unsupervised tanning. Controlling coin-operated machines is important because we do not want to ban teens from using tanning equipment only to have them find more dangerous, even less supervised, methods of tanning. Converting coin-operated tanning beds to manual control would come at a low cost—under \$20—according to the JCTA and would help close the loopholes in Bill 30.

Bill 30 also fails to clearly differentiate between UV tanning and spray tanning. It's important to protect the salon's ability to provide spray tanning to youth, since this plays a part in preventing the use of UV tanning in providing an alternative to youth who want to maintain that tanned appearance. We need to ensure that the proposed legislation is clarified to avoid any misinterpretation or unnecessary cost to small business while still promoting the best protection for our youth.

The JCTA's recommendations to enhance Bill 30 make them one of the many groups that support the regulation of the indoor tanning sector. Many health promotion groups have called for creating guidelines on access to tanning beds for youth in addition to the Canadian Cancer Society. These groups include the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Dermatology Association, Canadian Paediatric Society, Ontario Medical Association, Association of Local Public Health Agencies, and, of course, the Canadian Cancer Society. These groups recommend that children and youth under 18 years old not be allowed to use tanning equipment.

The public is also in favour of indoor tanning regulation in Ontario. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've received thousands of letters from people across this province voicing their support for establishing guidelines on tanning bed use. A lot of these letters have come from youth themselves, which I think is particularly appropriate and certainly indicates that youth are getting the message here. A 2011 Ipsos Reid poll of 822 Ontarians commissioned by the cancer society found that 80% of adults support legislation to regulate the tanning industry, and 83% support a ban on indoor tanning for youth under 18 years old.

Six provinces have already either introduced or implemented legislation restricting tanning bed use by youth, ranging from outright bans in Quebec, British Columbia,

Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to mandatory parental consent in Manitoba.

In February, the federal government announced that it would toughen existing health warnings about the dangers of tanning beds. The changes would force operators to display a health warning label reading, "Not recommended for use by those under 18 years of age," and, "Tanning equipment can cause cancer," as well as a list of other health risks associated with tanning.

In the federal House of Commons, Conservative MP James Bezan has tabled two bills pushing for stronger regulation on labelling and on using tanning equipment. MP Bezan stated, "My wife is a melanoma cancer survivor, and both of us used tanning beds. This is why I am fighting one of the most deadly but also most preventable cancers." He urges all provinces to follow in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Quebec's footsteps by banning youth from using tanning equipment.

While Health Canada regulates the sale, lease and import of tanning beds, the regulation of tanning bed use in commercial establishments, including age restrictions, falls under provincial jurisdiction, and so this House is faced with the responsibility of ensuring that tanning equipment is used safely.

Outside of Canada, many other jurisdictions have taken steps towards reducing the use of tanning equipment. In the United States, California and Vermont have banned youth under 18 from using tanning beds, and more than 30 states currently restrict minors' access to indoor tanning, either through parental consent or setting an age limit.

A number of countries also have legislation restricting or prohibiting tanning bed use by youth, including Britain, Iceland, Finland, Portugal, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden and France. Closer to home, in Mississauga and Oakville, there are bylaws that restrict access to tanning equipment for youth under age 18.

Restricting minors' access to tanning equipment at the provincial level, with penalties for operators who fail to comply, will help protect all Ontario youth from the health risks of indoor tanning. Provisions such as requiring tanning bed owners to post signs about the health risks of tanning bed use will promote informed decision-making for all tanning bed users across the province.

We strongly believe in the importance of keeping our youth healthy, educating them and encouraging them to make good decisions. We look forward to moving ahead with this bill in the best interests of our youth, to work towards creating a healthy Ontario.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that we do support this bill entirely. We do believe that there are some suggestions that can be made, as we indicated, suggestions that have been made by the Joint Canadian Tanning Association and by others that will strengthen this bill, such as including the ban on self-operated or coin-operated tanning beds and by not including spray tanning in this ban, which I hope we'll have the opportunity to discuss in greater detail in committee.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to address some of these issues this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to follow my esteemed colleague the health critic for the PC Party.

It's a pleasure to stand here today and to give my thoughts on this bill. I just want to review for the people listening at home: "The bill prohibits selling, offering for sale, or providing for consideration tanning services or ultraviolet light treatments to persons under 18. Directing the advertising or marketing of such services or treatments to persons under 18 is also prohibited. Persons who sell such services or treatments are required to notify their local medical officer of health that they intend to do so and to post signs in their businesses about the health effects of the services or treatments.

"Inspection powers, offences, and regulation-making powers are provided for."

Speaker, because we know that tanning beds do cause cancer, I believe we have an absolute duty to advertise these known dangers to teens. Particularly in my role as deputy health critic, it's a concern that I take very seriously. We shouldn't ever turn our heads from something that is going to do harm to someone who may not be at a point in life that they can make their own decisions.

There's a lot of cachet out there on people's looks. A tan, for many people, is something that they take very seriously, so they'll go to these tanning beds without understanding that these are carcinogens. I think we have to do our utmost to ensure that the youth of today understand that. It's our job, as legislators in this hallowed hall, to make sure that we're taking those steps so that someone doesn't needlessly die from that.

Skin cancer, as many of the leading organizations tell us, is the most common type of cancer, but it's also the most preventable. It's something that I think, again—with good education, with good communication, with us taking that step in the House today, we can prevent these types of cancers.

That is very significant, not only for the life of the individual but also for the resources of our health care system. If people end up with cancer, they have to go through that painful, arduous and very costly treatment system, and that, again, prevents other people from going through our system. So why would we not, in good conscience, do things to prevent that?

0930

My background originally was as a recreation director. I'm a big believer in: Let's keep people active; let's keep people fit, as opposed to trying to fix them once they've gone down a different path. I don't see this bill as a whole lot different. If we can prevent someone from getting cancer, it's good for the individual, obviously, but it's also good for our system and it's certainly good for our health care system. Through education and improved regulation, we can save lives.

I'd like to just add here that certainly the federal government is also taking a stand on this. They announced in February that they're proposing nationwide changes that

would actually require tanning beds in all provinces to display a health warning label to remind Canadians of those risks. The proposed changes would require all tanning beds to display a health warning decal with the following messages, for example: "Not recommended for use by those under 18 years of age," "Tanning equipment can cause cancer," as well as a bolded list of other health risks associated with tanning. The feds are doing it; other provinces are doing it. It only makes sense that, as one of the leading provinces in our great nation, we should be standing behind that 100%.

The local cancer society volunteers have been in to see me numerous times about this, and I'm proud to be able to bring their message to Queen's Park, along with our guests in the gallery today who are out there working feverishly in our communities across this great province to try to bring this bill in again. I think everybody has the common goal to ensure that our teens are not put in a position that they may not know the dangers; they may not understand the consequences that may happen to them many, many years down the road in life, and therefore we have to do that.

Even the World Health Organization—in July 2009, their agency for research on cancer monograph working group declared that the use of UV-emitting tanning devices is carcinogenic to humans. That word alone—if any of us have had family or friends suffer from cancer—I've unfortunately lost a sister to cancer. My mom is a breast cancer survivor; I have a sister who is a breast cancer survivor. I can only tell you, from watching them go through what they've had to—we have a great colleague in the House who's actually valiantly fighting right now. Any form of cancer is something that I think we always have to be taking the forefront on. We have to be leading the charge and putting legislation in place to prevent that.

This new carcinogenic classification places tanning beds alongside tobacco smoke, asbestos and uranium as known cancer-causing agents. It would be unfathomable that we would stand in this House and not do something, when you look at those three things that are standing beside—who would allow their child to go into a room filled with uranium or asbestos without some kind of precaution and being able to educate them and ensure that they know that?

The World Health Organization reports that the risk of melanoma is increased by 75% when use of tanning devices starts at age 30 or younger. Again, we really have to take that precaution. We have to ensure that this bill that has been introduced by the minister is something that we take very seriously, that we take very diligently, and we spend the time to do this right. We have to put some legislation in place that's going to ensure that there are vehicles, and there needs to be some accountability and some enforcement of that if we're going to do this well.

Facts from the Canadian Dermatology Association suggest that melanoma is now the eighth most frequent cancer in Canada, affecting 5,500 people in 2011 and causing 950 deaths. Again, if we can prevent even one death, it's worth the time and the effort that we put into

putting a bill like this on the floor. We need to get it voted on; we need to get it moving through the House as quickly as possible.

The Canadian Dermatology Association goes on to tell me that melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer. Excessive ultraviolet exposure from the sun and sun beds plays a leading role in the development of melanoma and is the most preventable cause of the disease. Again, it just makes common sense. I'm hopeful that all three parties will see it from that perspective and we can bring this bill as quickly as we can.

Looking at all cancers found in the 15-to-29 age group, melanoma was the third most common cancer in young women and represented 11% of new cases. There's growing evidence that exposure to ultraviolet radiation through the use of tanning beds and sun lamps increases the risk of developing melanoma, especially if exposure begins in adolescence or young adulthood.

Once you've been granted adulthood, then I guess the reality is, Speaker—what we would suggest, or what I would certainly suggest to individuals, is that you have the right to make your own choices. But I think it's our duty protect our youth. It's our duty to protect those young pages in front of you so that they live a long, prosperous and happy life, Speaker. This type of legislation will help us to be able to do that.

Some general observations, when I was doing some research on this: the general public is aware that tanning outside is harmful. If you spend too much time in the sun, you get a burn, and that burn, over long periods of time, is purported to be one of the causes of establishing cancer. But I think what they often mistakenly believe is that tanning in a salon is a safer alternative to sunbathing, and that's absolutely not the truth, particularly in those younger years. I think anything you do should be done in moderation, whether you're outside sunbathing—and if you're an adult and want to go to these tanning beds, again, I think you have to do all of this with the knowledge that there could be some concerns down the road.

We're not opposed to the industry. The industry, I think, is about a billion-dollar industry, and there are about 3,000 tanning salons across the country. As an adult, again, like most things in life, we're not here to tell you how to live your life; we're not here to tell you what you can and can't or should or shouldn't do. We may offer some helpful suggestions, but I think when it comes to our youth, I'm definitely prepared to stand in this House and take a stand. I'm prepared to take a stand and say that absolutely my job is to protect those youth and ensure that we're putting legislation in place that will be there as a protection.

We need to work with the industry so that they again are onboard with this and that they're being proactive in their promotion. And it only makes sense for them. Again, why would any business knowingly do harm to their future customers? I think we can look out and expect that they're going to support this: the ban for the younger children.

We have to understand that certainly the tanning bed industry is there. Our forum would be to go and consult

with the industry to make sure they understand why we're doing this and ensure that we have their feedback, like anything we do. I think if you do that in a balanced, progressive manner and do it ahead of time and you have that opportunity for consultation, then you can put good legislation in place.

I think my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa has stated again that our job—and particularly in both of our capacities as critics of health care—is that we have to always be on the lookout for things that are going to put any harm in the way of the people who we represent across this great province. It's our fiduciary responsibility to ensure that we're taking action when necessary.

We have groups like the Canadian Cancer Society who are out there working very diligently. They're bringing the message door to door. They're bringing it to our offices. They're bringing it to receptions here at Queen's Park. We, as legislators, I think owe it to them to hear them out and understand where the concerns are.

This has huge, huge, huge economic impacts. If someone gets cancer and goes through the process, there's hospitalization, there are very costly drugs, there's the use of the resources of the cancer technologists, the doctors. Speaker, it's one of those things, again, that, to me, we just always have to be looking at in a proactive sense. We need to ensure that people are not going to be put in harm's way unknowingly.

One of the articles that I had as research yesterday was talking about how on a cigarette package, for many years, those cigarette packages—people smoked and smoked and smoked, and they never, ever looked. Now, they put on a pretty graphic picture on there to be able to say, "Absolutely, think about what you're doing before you open this thing and start doing what you're going to do with those cigarettes." I think this is very similar. It is a carcinogen, very similar to the cigarettes; it's a carcinogen similar to asbestos. I think we need to ensure that there are definitely rules in place, that there's communication, that there are tools and that there are resources.

I think the biggest thing here, Speaker, is that education and communication. I think we have to make sure we are making our youth aware. Equally importantly, we need to make sure that the parents of those youth are aware, because sometimes, like the Internet, kids can go on and they can do their own research, and people may not even know about that.

I think what we need to understand is that this is a very easy thing to implement. The execution will take some work and will take some money to ensure that we roll that out and the industry rolls it out. But I think there's certainly lots of opportunity to be able to do that, Speaker, and if we just come together as the three parties on the bill, I think it's what people send us to Queen's Park to do: to work on these collaborative types of bills that are going to be for the greater good, the benefit of all Ontarians, and I can't fathom that we wouldn't do that. One of my questions, I guess, is: Why hasn't it already been done? Better late than never. At least it's here today, and we've had the opportunity to speak to this.

Again, I'd like to welcome Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society, who are here, and thank them for all of their work and your colleagues' work across this great province. There are volunteers who are there giving their heart and soul. As I say, I've been lobbied three times by the one volunteer in my riding, and she is a wonderful lady. The cancer society office actually, ironically, now has just moved into the office building that my constituency office is in, so I get lobbied on an almost daily basis to some degree. But I just have to reach out to those volunteers who are out giving their time, their energy and, in many cases, their resources to ensure that we as politicians are hearing it. But they're also out in the community. They're running events; they're running promotional ads. They're doing everything they can in their power. My hat is off to all of your volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for all you do.

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As I say, I had a pretty close touch with cancer in my own family. Terry Fox is one of my biggest idols. I just can't fathom every day getting up and running 26 miles on one leg—with that heart, that determination, that soul—in the weather conditions, uphill, in any weather you can think of, day after day after day. I'm actually a little bit guilty. I should be out running at least once in my lifetime; he did it every single day, and he did that so that others wouldn't have to suffer like he had to do. He'll always be inspiring to me, and as cancer impacts all of us in our daily lives, our family members, our friends, there's not one person, I think, who hasn't been affected.

Certainly, when I saw this legislation coming before me, it wasn't very hard to make a determination that I would stand up proudly and support the need for this legislation. Because anything we can do to prevent cancers—and that's the key here, I think, is that whole prevention, the side of saying, "Let's not go down that road and try to make you better at the end of the day; let's ensure that we're going to do the things that we can up front and be proactive," which saves our system, but more importantly saves that family and that individual from going through that.

Bill 30 is a measured response to the mounting scientific evidence that points to the known dangers associated with using tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatment for youth. I think what we're trying to really say here is that some people will come out and they may feel they have a right, they may feel that, "Well, you can't tell me what I can do and can't do." But there are many things with our youth that—again, I don't think we allow youth to drink alcohol before a certain age; we don't allow youth to vote until they are 19. So why would we allow them to go to a tanning bed, something that could drastically impact their health in later years? I get the argument and I have had some people push back and say, "You know, you have to stay out of this stuff. Just let people do their own thing." Well, yes, that's true to a point.

I have a 15-year-old and an 18-year-old son, and they're my biggest treasures. I want them to be here

down the road. So I'm a bit of a hard knuckle, maybe, to them and I won't allow them to go to something like tanning, particularly when they're under my roof and under the age of 18. That's just one of my rules. I won't allow them to smoke, particularly because of those instances of cancer in my family.

In this case I will take a stand and we will say yes, we would be prepared to support that, because it really is putting youth at risk if we don't do that. I couldn't walk home and look myself in the mirror if I walked away from this and didn't do it, Speaker.

As I've mentioned a couple of times, and I think Christine has as well, this is going to restrict it to indoor tanning equipment for youth under 18. It's consistent with existing regulation and minors' access to other harmful substances like tobacco. These restrictions recognize that youth are less likely to consider—you know, we've all been there, Speaker. I think you still think at times that you're a youthful man. I saw you on the ice the other night when you were trying to referee our Legiskaters and Dentonators game—and I'm proud to say the Legiskaters did win that game. We appreciate the Ontario Dental Association, and particularly Maggie Head for her organizational efforts in that game. You were trying to relive and recapture a bit of your youth there, Speaker.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: He's been very trying, at times.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's been very trying, at times.

Getting back to this point, we have to restrict this; we have to always be putting our youth—they are our future. That's a bit of a cliché that gets used maybe too often in some cases, but they truly are our leaders. They're our next generation. They're why we are here. I won't speak for all of my 107 colleagues in this House, but it's certainly why I came here: to make a better future for my kids, and hopefully someday grandkids, down the road. Something like this certainly allows us to take a step in that direction and have a small influence on at least one person's life, if we do it well.

Dr. Samir Gupta, chair of the Ontario Medical Association's dermatology section, states: "The evidence has been unequivocal over the last several years that tanning bed radiation is linked to skin cancer." So again, we have the medical background, we have the proof that this really does cause challenges, so why would we not step up and do the right thing here? "It's the sun exposure you're getting in your early years that predicts skin cancer later on."

So again, a bit of a shout-out to those youth and to those parents who are listening or who are in the gallery with us today: Be educating your kids at that young age. Don't allow your children at 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 years of age be out in the sun getting baked and fried. I have the odd occasion to go to a beach—I have beautiful beaches in the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Sauble Beach is one of the nicest seven-mile stretches of beach you're going to find in the world. People come from all over the world to sun themselves there. You walk down the streets sometimes, when I'm out visiting my constituents in the beach area, and they're just as red as a beetroot. It

doesn't take long anymore. On certain days in the height of summer, 10 minutes, or maybe 15 minutes at the very most, without the proper suntan lotion on, and you can be fried. That, over a prolonged period, if you keep doing it—yes, you're going to look nice and crystal bronze at the end of the summer, maybe, but boy, what's your health worth?

Looking good when you're 16 or 15 or 10 or 12, as opposed to having to go through—I think it might be helpful if we took all of our youth through a cancer ward and let them see what happens to someone who thought they were invincible in their youth. We all go through that. I'm certainly not standing here and saying I didn't make mistakes—and still don't make lots of mistakes, in fact. But when it comes to my health care, one of the things I've certainly seen, working close to a hospital in my former capacity as the executive director of a hospital foundation, is how much our health really means and how much people don't really value it until they're sick. Many people would come into my office to make a donation because a doctor was, in many cases, able to help them, or a nurse or a nurse practitioner. They say, "You know, I just wish I had used more common sense when I was younger. I really just wish I hadn't gone down that road, because now I see how much it's costing. I see the drain and the emotional stress I'm putting on my family to go through this type of illness." It's just one of those ones that, to me—an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure. I really think we have to be thinking that with this type of thing.

Bill 30 is going to require tanning bed operators to request identification from people who appear to be under 25. I think that's a pretty reasonable request. Some people, in their vanity, still like to go out to certain establishments, and I think they actually take it as a bit of an identification tag if they get asked for ID. So in this case I don't think there's anything wrong, again. I'd rather err, if I was the person, in asking a 26-year-old, even, or a 30-year-old, maybe, in some cases. I think they'll take that as a good-natured thing and they'll know that I'm doing it not because I'm trying to be the enforcer but because I truly, honestly care and want to do something with you.

Bill 30 is consistent with the laws in tobacco sales, which again stipulate that tobacco cannot be sold to a person who appears to be under 25 unless that person produces identification identifying and indicating they are of majority age.

It would also ban advertising and marketing of tanning salons. Again, one of the biggest things I think, particularly with this explosion of our social Internet sites, Facebook—social media is what I was trying to say—is where people can advertise, people can blog, people can put all kinds of things, and a lot of companies today can spend inordinate amounts of money trying to entice. They make all the ads look catchy and sexy and they all use the glitz and the glamour, the funky clothes, the roller skating, to entice those youth, to say, "This could be you." They take that model picture and put it up there, and that's

very tough, as someone who's not really an old, old guy—getting up there in years, but not quite as much as my colleague here. But we have to do our part, because there are people out there who will try to utilize that advertising and marketing domain to entice a young person who hasn't given thought, who is in a different place in life, who is just thinking about the fun and, "I'm going to live forever." We need to do things to make sure there's an equal balance there, Speaker.

It also requires tanning bed owners to post signs about the ban and the health risks associated. So again, a little more reality. When I walk in—back to those cigarette packages that have the warning label on and that picture that certainly stops me in my tracks. I've never been a smoker. My brothers are quite a bit older than I, and they gave me a cigarette. I unfortunately was ill. They gave me a pipe five minutes later and I was unfortunately ill. And five minutes later they gave me a cigar and I was unfortunately ill. The only other time: When my god-daughter was born, my best buddy said, "You've got to have a cigar to celebrate her life." I took one little puff. I didn't inhale, because I knew what was going to happen: I was sick all over. That was the end of my smoking career. And I'm proud to say that.

There's not a lot of people that I've been out with in that generation who didn't at least try it. Some of them, unfortunately, became addicted to cigarettes, and I worry about them, because I think that cancer thing is going to nip them at some point down the road. Every day I try to influence them to stop. Certainly my family members, now that I've lost a sister and have two other family members who have cancer—I try every day to do that. This is just one of those other opportunities for me to do my little part in some little way.

If one of our pages today, from listening to this, chooses not to go into a tanning salon until they're at least over 25 or 30, if one of them chooses not to smoke cigarettes or a pipe or any of the other horrible things that are out there at their beck and call, then I've done my little part and I'll go home happy at the end of the day saying I've at least made a difference. To the pages: Please take this very seriously. It is something that you have to be very cognizant of. Talk to your friends. If you know friends who are going, get them some education. Walk with them, show them, go to a tanning salon and see if this information is there. Go to your cancer society and get the information to stop them from there.

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To give teeth to this regulation, Bill 30 authorizes inspectors to enforce these requirements. There are going to be fines in place of \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations, so this is no small matter, and if there are, as there many times are—there can be a bad apple in an industry—if they're out doing this and they're continuing to let people under 18 in, then we have to put some teeth in that will prohibit that and at least act as a deterrent for those people.

Finally, Bill 30 requires that all tanning bed operators provide the local medical officer of health with the name,

business address and telephone number where the tanning service or ultraviolet treatment is sold. At least now, we're going to know where these things are. We're going to know each establishment so they can be inspected properly. We can ensure that they're following the regulations and, if not, like anything that has well served the people of Ontario, there needs to be accountability. The rules are the rules. We treat everyone the same way. If you're not willing to abide by the rules, then there need to be some consequences. That's a message that, again, I follow in life. We all have choices. We all have the ability to make choices, but there are consequences to each of the decisions we make. In cases like this, when you're taking advantage of, particularly, a youth, I think we need some teeth in the regulation to be able to go in. They're there trying to make money; well, this is a good way to deter it: by putting some pretty hefty fines.

There will be a registry of tanning equipment operators so that, if passed, this legislation can be overseen and enforced. As I was saying earlier, we're going to know exactly where every one of these is across the province, and if you were ever to walk into one and it wasn't registered—there should be a label there saying, "I'm a registered salon owner." It's only good for their industry, so they should be helping us weed those bad characters out. But if you ever did, as an individual, walk in, the first thing you should do is call your medical officer of health and report it so we can get that out of the system. We just can't afford to go down there.

As I mentioned earlier, this is the most deadly form of skin cancer, and it increases by 1.8% with each additional tanning session per year. So if you had 20 of those, then it's 20% more likely you're going to get cancer down the road. It's one of those things that you have to think—again, the novelty of a tan and looking great because of some magazine or some promotional activity isn't worth your health. It's just not worth putting you and/or your family—and our system, for that matter—through the cost to treat someone from a cancer that could have been prevented.

I harp on, and I'll continue to harp on, with my recreation background: Let's prevent the things that we have control over. Let's not try to fix them once we allow people to get cancer. Let's not allow a business to operate that knowingly puts at risk youth who are going to, at some point down the road in their life, get cancer and we're going to have to treat that and try to make them better.

Interjection: Be proactive.

Mr. Bill Walker: Be proactive; absolutely.

A study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society showed that between 2006 and 2012, the use of tanning beds more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, among Ontario students in grades 11 and 12. That's horrendous. It's going in the wrong direction, and it's exactly why we need this type of legislation to be able to help.

Interjection: Vanity.

Mr. Bill Walker: Vanity is very—I was almost going to say "important," and that's the wrong word. Vanity,

unfortunately, is a very powerful motivator for some people, and again, particularly at an age—and I'm not saying anything disrespectful to youth, because there are very bright, intelligent youth who do make very wise and good choices, but there is a percentage of the population who don't do that. This type of legislation is required to ensure that that won't happen, and at least, at the very end of the day, we're forcing those students of that age group to look and say, "Is this really worth it?" Do you really know what you're doing when you lie under that bed? Do you really know that there are proven clinical studies that this is going to increase your chance of cancer later in life? We have to ensure that we stand up for our youth. They are our future.

The research is clear that the main environmental risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to that ultraviolet radiation from the sun and through indoor tanning. It is important to clarify that exposure to UV rays is linked to skin cancer—I've said that earlier—and that UV rays from tanning beds can be even more harmful than those rays outside. I'd don't know why that is, I'm not really into the technology side of things, but just think of being encapsulated in a little bed and those rays are right there. You can't move. There's nothing between you and those rays getting at you. So we have to do the things that we can at this point.

I've got some petitions here—in fact, a whole raft of petitions—"Fight Cancer," and these are from many, many constituents across my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I know we're not supposed to use props, and I'm not using it for that, Speaker, but I wanted to make sure that you could see that these are people who have signed their names to them, saying, "I absolutely agree with this." It goes on, "I'm concerned about the health risks associated with indoor tanning." It causes melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. It's one of the most common types of cancer for youth between the ages of 15 and 29 and is one of the most preventable diseases. Cancer is a reality facing all communities across Canada. Based on current diagnosis rates, two in five Canadians will develop cancer during their lifetime—two in five. That's unbelievable. We need to be doing more to ensure that people don't have to go through and bear the pain, the agony, the emotional stress and duress that this horrible, horrible disease causes. An estimated one out of every four Canadians is expected to die from cancer.

There are all kinds of fundraisers; there are all kinds of research. I'm a big proponent of supporting those research efforts to ensure that at some point—and as I allude back to my hero, Terry Fox, we will, at some point, find a cure. I'm certain of that. We have to do it sooner than later because it is such a huge drain on the family structure, on the family unit.

The stress that I see families go through—in my own family, it was horrendous. To watch a sister—she died in three days. She went to the hospital on Wednesday, and she never came home Sunday. She didn't even know she had it. But, unfortunately, she was a 35-year smoker, and

that, at some point, I trust was the cause. She had lung cancer, and it spread through her whole body. She didn't even know she was ill. That was the most horrifying thing that I have ever gone through.

If we can do anything in this House, this is one of the things that—I think we should be standing up, and we should be expediting this bill to get it through. We don't need to be standing in this House, speaking about this for hours, let alone days upon weeks. We need to get this done. We need to ensure that none of those pages in front of you, or the great youth across our province, ever go through this on something that we can prevent today. We could have this done and through, and I would hope that the government of the day would take this bill, of all bills, and expedite it through. There's absolutely nothing that I think should stand in the way.

To me, when people take time to actually walk to my office, fax my office and hand-sign something—in any career I've had, if you're willing to put it in writing, I've got time to listen to you. This is something that people have taken the time and got them—and I trust, from the cancer society, that these are across the province. These are probably in every one of our offices, and I think you could probably fill the Clerks' table. I'm going to submit these to the Clerks' table today, if I could have a page come up, and I'll have them delivered to the Clerks' table.

The other thing, I think, that I want and I haven't—thank you very much, page Amina. Thank you so much. I hope you're enjoying your time here, you and your colleagues. The other thing I haven't talked about and alluded to is there are other ways. We can do other things. Some people will say that they go to the tanning salon because they want to get vitamin D. Well, there are lots of other ways of getting vitamin D without putting yourself in harm's way and accepting the risks that come with those tanning beds—for instance, through safe exposure to the sun and taking supplements.

I mean, again, the sun is actually good for us. We need that sun. If it goes away, despite what Wiarton Willie says—at times, he doesn't want the sun to come out. Some people do, some people don't, without a shadow of a doubt. He's a bit like a politician because 50% of the time he's right and 50% of the time he's wrong with the people out there. But he wants to see the sun. We all need to see the sun.

In those February blah days when we haven't seen it for a while, you can tell people's energy levels are going down. People are getting a bit grumpy, even in this House. Mr. Leal, sometimes, you would agree with me that maybe people in this House get grumpy around February at times because they haven't seen the sun enough. They haven't got that vitamin D quotient. Would you confer with that?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The odd time.

Interjection: Eat tomatoes.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Eat tomatoes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Eat tomatoes. There you go. Thank you so much. So, see, even across the floor, we're actual-

ly finally working together. We're able to work collaboratively to find some help and some cure for our vitamin D deficiencies. Maybe if we all took a bit more, this place would be a little bit more friendly. I think your colleague, Speaker, talks about the downward spiral, and I think we can all support that upward spiral.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Eat the tomatoes; don't throw them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Eat the tomatoes; don't throw them. That's right.

The main reasons students give for using tanning beds are feeling they look better with a tan, getting a tan before going on vacation or for special occasions and because of peer influence. We hear that with all kinds of things: alcohol, drugs. But this is really no different. This is one of those ones that, again, if all of your colleagues are saying, "I want to look tanned," and, "I want to look spiffy, like that article in the *Glamour* magazine," it's a very tough thing to overturn.

I say, again, to all the youth who may be out there: Please stand strong. Please show your will. Please show your conviction, and also step up for your other friends who may be doing it. Grab them by the hand and say, "Look, I just want to have a chat. Do you know?" Come and see one of us. Come and see someone in the cancer society who has the information to be able to show you.

To look out for our youth's best interests, we must appropriately address these products and services that put youth at considerable risk. As Progressive Conservatives, we don't believe in creating bans just for the sake of it. In fact, we continually, in this House, say we need to get rid of legislation and regulation that is not serving the people. There is an inordinate amount of regulation and legislation, and at times, I think there are organizations that say that that's their only job: to move paper around. That, absolutely, we don't want. But this is the type of legislation—this is the type of regulation—that we are proud to stand behind.

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There's a demonstrable need when we're talking about tanning bed use among minors. We need to ensure that at every step, at every opportunity—that's why I've talked for almost 30 minutes on this. It may be a bit redundant in places, but I feel compelled to repeat it and repeat it and repeat it, because at some point, that extra time you've said it may just actually resonate with someone. They may just actually stop in their tracks and say, "You know what? I'm going to spend some time. I'm going to think about what Mr. Walker just said"—or Ms. Elliott or whoever else may speak on this bill in this House.

We need to be doing the proactive things. We need to ensure we're going to have the ability to put regulation that's going to serve the people.

I'm just going to conclude, if I can. We're going to put Bill 30—I certainly hope we're going to put Bill 30 in again. I implore the Liberal government, who controls what comes to the House and how quickly it goes through the House in second reading and third reading, to make this a priority. Let's not spend hours and days in this House.

I think Christine did a marvellous job of putting out the thought process, being able to share information and educate and communicate to people the ills that are associated with tanning beds. I think she was very articulate in what she said and on how this bill can address some of those and it can be a preventative. It can be doing our due diligence on behalf of our youth to ensure that there are regulations in place, that there are consequences if people are rogues and want to continue to run tanning beds illegally and allow those people under 18 years of age in.

I think what we want to do is make sure that this legislation—An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments—is legislated, approved and, in fact, executed as soon as possible. It would be a great acknowledgement for all the work that our Canadian Cancer Society volunteers do in every single one of our communities. Again, I do a heartfelt shout-out for all of the work that you do. I know that sometimes it's trudging through the laneways in the middle of winter, door-knocking and doing those things. Raising funds and running fundraisers is a lot of work, a lot of time and a lot of volunteer energy and resources. My hat is off to you and every single person in your organization, because you are actually making a difference in people's lives.

We are only a small part here—that we can help enhance that effort on your behalf. It's my hope that today we can get this through, we can get all three parties' support, get it to the table, get it through, get it passed and make it legislation, so that tomorrow those labels will go out the door and we will actually help our youth down the road.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to speak to Bill 30, to ban these tanning beds to youth, and happy to hear the comments from the two members who spoke this morning, from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and from Whitby-Oshawa—very sensible comments we've heard this morning. It's the kind of good common sense that we should hear more of in these chambers.

Cancer touches all of us. As recently as two years ago, I lost a good friend and a co-worker—far too young. He was the age that I am right now. He died just down the street at the hospital, from melanoma. He was not a tanning bed user; he was just somebody who was unfortunate.

But I think that when we have the power to actually combat cancer, we need to do that. This is an obvious bill—this is an obvious step—to promote better health and to fight cancer in Ontario, and that's why I think it's clear and obvious that New Democrats will support this bill.

In fact, I think we should note that it was the member from Nickel Belt, our health critic, France Gélinas, who brought this forward for years. I look at the approach that Ms. Gélinas takes to health, and I think that this is what we should be talking about. This is the approach we should have in this House and in this province. We heard it echoed this morning from folks here.

This idea that we need to do the things upfront to promote health and to protect the health of people here—when you look at the provincial budget, there's obviously a problem with the budget right now and the growing costs of health care. All of these costs are about responding to sickness, and so few steps are taken to stop people from getting sick in the first place. I think we need an entirely different framework when it comes to health care in this province. When I talk to France Gélinas, these are the things that she tells me. There is so much that we can do as a society to make people healthier.

I'm happy to hear the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound talk about our duty to protect youth. I do think that we have a duty to protect youth, to protect all of us, to promote good health, and I'd like to see more of this approach from all members in this assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Who's up? The Minister of Community and Social Services—we have a teeter-totter going here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm just absolutely delighted to respond to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As one who's experienced, both in my family and personally, the fear of cancer—and I know what it does to one. Thank goodness for the cancer society and the cancer support groups around the province who are there to assist families to cope with this.

This bill just makes sense. It made sense two years ago, it made sense five years ago and certainly it makes sense today. The sooner we can mobilize the often slow-to-be-mobilized resources of this place to get this bill discussed in all the readings where that's required and have it become law, the sooner we'll be able to look at ourselves in the mirror in the morning and say, "Hey, maybe we did something useful the other day when we passed the bill."

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Finally, after 10 years.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. Well, there's never a wrong time to do the right thing, right? I stand with those who favour moving forward.

I was particularly impressed with the young man's—sorry—the honourable member's presentation.

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Us young guys have to stick together, right?

He captured it well, as did his colleague from—Ajax?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whitby-Oshawa.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Whitby-Oshawa, okay—and colleagues in the third party, and I know all my colleagues here. It's time to move forward. It's never a wrong time to do the right thing. Let's get at it.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I want to applaud the efforts of my honourable colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and my honourable colleague from Whitby-Oshawa—is that correct? As I listen to other members

within our esteemed Legislature, I'm thrilled to see that this bill will pass; this bill will get through.

As a father of three and an occasional user, in the past, of tanning beds—but even my children—I would watch them and caution them, “Don't go in those tanning beds.” But now, through the efforts of our cancer society and bringing forward the carcinogenic aspects of tanning beds on young people and on people in general, and the fact that it does cause cancer—at least as a parent I want to ensure that my children are safe and not able to go in those tanning beds. Unfortunately, they're beyond that 18 years of age or 19 years of age, but again I look at it and I say, “You know what? We can still protect today's youth.”

We look at health care costs throughout this entire province, and health care is the number one expense of this government. Let's be proactive. Let's use preventive approaches to protect today's youth because today's youth will be tomorrow's aging population, and with an aging population, all of a sudden you get the melanoma; you get the other effects of cancer. That's not a good thing, and that just escalates costs as well.

Let's protect our loved ones. Let's warn them in advance that tanning beds, especially at young ages and with tender young skin, are not a healthy thing. They need to be protected; as adults, let's protect our youth for tomorrow.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It needs to be stated quite categorically, I think: There is absolutely nothing healthy-looking about a tan. We know that most of the users of tanning beds are young women, so this is a women's issue. As women's critic, I wanted to focus on that.

The member spoke about the role that the beauty industry and the fashion industry play in this. I have to tell you, my daughter works for a dermatologist, and he and she will tell you that there's nothing pretty about the effects of sun damage over time. Women need to get the message that tanning doesn't make you prettier; it makes you uglier over time. We know—we're women; come on, let's be real—we like to look good. So do men, of course. But the message has to get out. We need the beauty industry outside; we need the fashion industry outside. We need to get the message to our daughters, to our granddaughters, very, very clearly and succinctly.

Of course we support this bill. It's again the member from Nickel Belt's bill, brought in via the government. We want to see it passed as quickly as possible. But I think, once it's passed, there's still a great deal of work to do, and the work to do is this: to get the message out that there's nothing healthy-looking about a tan and there's nothing beautiful or cute about a tan either, and to show the effects—as we've shown the effects of cigarette smoking—of tanning and the sun on skin over time.

I can tell you, we in Canada are prettier. I've talked to Australians and those people who are out in the sun in Australia a lot of the time. We look younger up here. Why? One simple difference: We're not as exposed to

the sun as often. Any dermatologist will tell you this. Anybody who works in a clinic and sees the effects will tell you this.

We need to get that message out to our daughters and our granddaughters. We ask the beauty industry and the fashion industry to help us do that. There's nothing healthy-looking about a tan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I really think we've had a very productive discussion today on an issue that we can all agree on: that Bill 30 is a bill that should be passed without any further delay. The time has come, though it has been presented before. I do really thank the member for Nickel Belt for her efforts in this respect. I think the time has come now for us all to move forward with it.

I would like to thank, first of all, my colleague the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his very thoughtful remarks, as well as the remarks by the member for Davenport, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I think everybody has added a lot of their own experience to this, and I think it's fair to say that no family is immune to the ravages of cancer. In my own situation, both of my parents passed away at a very young age due to cancer. It's something that we need to be vigilant against and to do anything that we can to make sure we can protect our young people from developing cancer down the road.

I would agree entirely with the member from Parkdale–High Park, who said that this is very much a young women's issue, although young men are also involved in it. I have three sons. I can't say that tanning beds were ever an issue with them. We've had other issues, but not tanning beds. But I think, certainly, with a lot of young women, having a tanned appearance, primarily to go to prom and to other special occasions, is really an important thing. We really need to get the message out there that it is not healthy over the long term and you don't want to have that leathery appearance as you get older and to expose yourself to cancer when you don't need to.

I'm really happy this has come forward. I'm really pleased that the representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society were here today. I would also like to sincerely thank all of the volunteers in all of our communities who do so much work in promoting the efforts of the cancer society, the work that they're trying to do, and in raising money for the cause. Many volunteers are out this month, so if they come to your door, please give generously. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

Mr. Mike Colle: No question period today?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'm not introducing anybody, but I grew up in a little place called New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and I just wanted to acknowledge today the passing of Canadian musical icon Rita MacNeil, who I got to meet when I was 11 years old, who brought an enormous amount of joy to the people of Nova Scotia and Canada. I wanted to express condolences to her family. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I won't steal one of her statements on that, but I appreciate it very much. I had a chance to meet her as well.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce my dear wife, Carole Paikin-Miller, in the west gallery.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce two friends of mine in the Legislature today: one is Robin Singh—Robin is from Brampton—and the other is Randhir Rai; he's from Orangeville. I really want to extend them a very, very warm welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to, first of all, say that people will be joining us in the gallery very shortly from the Ontario Association of Career Colleges, led by their director, Paul Kitchin. I want everybody to give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Jonah Schein: For the first time ever, I'd like to welcome students from City View Alternative: Myles Wyton-Fraser, Katie Newhouse, Dune Brule and Murley Herrle-Fanning. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to introduce the parents of page Stacey Fernandes, page captain today, from my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. Her father, Alex Fernandes, and mother, Susan Fernandes, are here joining us today. Thanks for being here. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce to the House today the 2013 Ontario Queen of the Furrow, Sara Little, and her friend Chris Wood.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week I had the opportunity to introduce a page from my riding, Kamryn Hartley. It's a big day for Kamryn. Kamryn is the page captain today, and she's joined in the members' east gallery by her mother—who has not left her side for two weeks, I think—Christie Hartley; and also by her grandfather from Pass Lake, Ontario, James Isaksen. We're thrilled to have them here with us today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome from my riding Beth Dodwell and Emerson Wargel. They won a Lunch With Your MPP certificate from the Taste of the Town fundraising event held by the Gibson Centre in Alliston. God bless them, and welcome.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's my pleasure to rise and acknowledge—I believe in one of the galleries today the legislative intern who is working in my office currently, Andrea Ernesaks, is here with us, from Ottawa originally. She's doing a really fantastic job, and I'm happy to have her in my office.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a large contingent from Prince Edward county, making the bus trip

here this morning. They're from POOCH, which stands for Patrons of Our County Hospital. They'll be rallying outside later to protect services and beds at Picton memorial hospital.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Zoe Letwin. She's the outreach coordinator at Partners in Research in London, a wonderful organization. Welcome, Zoe.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. Good morning, Premier. My question is for you. We have long said that someone has purposely removed documents. After weeks of testimony, we learned yesterday just how this charade actually worked. Your government, Premier, told the OPA to remove pages that said words like "TransCanada," "southwest GTA" and other words like that because they didn't precisely fit the scope. After removing thousands of pages, you turned over 36,000 documents. Then, Speaker, someone wised up and realized that this charade may actually be breaking the law, and 20,000 pages, including the ones originally removed, were turned over.

With pages still missing, Premier, is this your idea of transparency? Premier, just what is it you don't want Ontarians to find out?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off the bat. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I think all of us recognize that there is important work that's going on in the committee, and that work should continue. But if the honourable member wants to hold hearings on the floor of the Legislature, I'm quite happy to talk about some of the things that have gone on in the committee.

His reference, I believe, is to an individual by the name of Jesse Kulendran, who is an official in the Ministry of Energy—from what I understand, a mid-level official. There was a story that came out which she has denied in front of the committee.

I'd also like to quote from the Deputy Minister of Energy, who was asked this very question. He's someone whom the member who asked the question has called a credible and very solid witness. He testified the following—

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

Hon. John Milloy: Okay; I'll wait for the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You certainly will. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With all that tap dancing, Mr. Speaker, I actually thought he would end with jazz hands with that one.

The auditor told us that there were 10 side deals negotiated before you gave the company a sole-sourced deal to build a plant right next door to the one you're closing. Speaker, let me give you an example of Liberal negotiating. The company sought \$7 million in damages on an unrelated issue from years gone by. As a precondition to even start negotiating, the company demanded that the government pay them \$15.4 million to satisfy that \$7-million court case.

Premier, in your zeal to get this done, you went ahead and paid them that money and then forgave \$700,000 in court fees that they were ordered to pay. And to make sure no one ever heard of it, you buried this in a side deal. What other side deals did you do for Oakville?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member can't get away with dropping the drive-by smear that he had in the first question.

I'd like to quote the Deputy Minister of Energy, whom the honourable member himself called a credible and very solid witness. Here's what the deputy had to say: "I never directed Jesse to go to the OPA and ask them to exclude documents. I never myself directed the OPA to exclude ... documents. When I talked to Jesse about the allegations, she told me ... that she did not direct the OPA. I have no reason to not believe what Jesse has" said.

Furthermore, Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, launched an investigation into these allegations and confirmed that there was absolutely no evidence that Ms. Kulendran acted inappropriately.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member owes an apology to—

Interjection.

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

For the second time, the member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order, and I think he knows why I'm asking him to refrain.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let me tell you how the taxpayers and the ratepayers are paying for this \$15.4-million gift, seeing as you don't want to talk about it. Ten million dollars came through Dwight Duncan when he announced that the cancellation rose from \$180 million to \$190 million. The extra \$5.4 million was paid to the company—this is all from the AG's report—for a new power agreement, but allowed them to simply keep the money if the site wasn't deemed viable. But the auditor told us on page 15 that you knew the site wasn't viable even before you made the deal, so the company simply got to keep the \$5.4-million gift. Now that these facts have come out, maybe it's something the Attorney General will be looking into.

Premier, I ask you again: Tell us now about all of the other side deals made for Oakville.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member forgets the obvious, which is that his party,

in the 2011 election campaign, stated that if they were elected they would shut down the Mississauga plant.

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We've seen the YouTube video. We've seen the Leader of the Opposition as he stands there, surrounded by adoring PC candidates, promising to the community that if he is elected—on a question from Mr. Brennan of the Toronto Star—it was going to be done—"done, done, done." His candidates went out and said that the only way to stop this plant was to elect a Tim Hudak government. The fact of the matter is that their party was equally intent. It was a promise they made and a promise we kept.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, unless you've abdicated, I hope you'll actually answer the questions. This is getting tiresome. You say you want to be open and transparent, but all of your actions show exactly the opposite. In his press conference on Monday, the auditor said that you deliberately changed the language you were using to confuse the public about the total cost of the Mississauga gas plant cancellation. We've asked your energy minister to do the right thing and correct his record for repeatedly misinforming the House, but he's refused to do that. A pattern is emerging and your claims of transparency are being revealed as not standing up to the smell test. Will you now admit that you've been deliberately lowballing the cost of these cancellations to give the public a false impression of how much of their money you've wasted?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I want to thank the auditor for his work. I want to thank him for what he has done. We are accepting his findings, and he's provided a longer-term assessment by estimating cost and savings over 20 years; I said that yesterday. What the auditor does is provide an objective and independent report. I just want to remind the House and remind the member opposite that I asked the auditor to look at the Oakville situation. I asked the auditor in the name of openness and transparency. I have said from the beginning that I want all the information and all the questions that are being asked to be answered. That's why I asked the auditor to look at the Oakville situation. I'm not going to pre-empt his report—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew asked the question. I know he wants to hear the answer.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, the auditor is appearing in committee today, I understand, so the member opposite would have an opportunity to ask the auditor questions today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: We've been languishing in the muck and the mire in committee for months now, looking into your political decision to

cancel those gas plants. Witness after witness has provided sworn testimony that disputes your story and the stories of other Liberal loyalists. When you took over from Dalton McGuinty, you promised the public transparency, but just last week the former chief of staff to the Minister of Energy admitted to breaking the law by destroying his email records related to the gas plant cancellation. What was the reaction of your new government to this revelation? The trademark old McGuinty shrug.

Premier, you can end this. After all, isn't that what you and your new government have promised? It's time to come clean with the people of Ontario. Release all of the details relating to all the costs on Oakville.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm glad that they're speaking about the Oakville relocation now because the auditor has reported on Mississauga. But I'm very pleased to speak to the Oakville situation. I have in my hand a notice that was on the website of the OPA on September 24, 2012. I also have a memorandum of understanding that was on the website, and it's been there since September 2012. It's a legal agreement between TransCanada Energy Ltd., the Ontario Power Authority and Her Majesty the Queen. I want to refer to schedule B, the reimbursement agreement. All the details of the reimbursement agreement are on schedule B.

There is also schedule A, what the OPA agreement is all about. This has been translated into a 500-page document, which is also on the site. I'd like to have one of the pages come over here, please, and I'd like—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. That's my job.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish some people would take that advice.

Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakubski: Back to the Premier. Premier, you sound just like your predecessor when you defend the indefensible. After serving your entire career as a McGuinty Liberal, you just don't seem to know any other way. Why do you keep insisting on playing this game when no one believes you anymore? Your energy minister still contends that the cost of cancelling the Oakville plant will be \$40 million, but JoAnne Butler, a highly respected OPA vice-president, testified under oath that the cost at Oakville will be between \$769 million and \$926 million, and that your government has been aware of this for months.

Premier, here's what the people deserve: the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You have fallen far

from the lofty principles you claim to hold dear when you took this office. Did you ever really believe in those principles, or have the trappings of power destroyed every ounce of integrity that you ever had?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the volume and the emotion is not reflected by the facts. That's the reality.

I sent over a copy of a memorandum of understanding of the Oakville agreement with TransCanada Energy. It sets out all of the costs, the parameters of the agreement, and that has been public and on the website since September 12, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time the committee turned its attention to the issue of how we site these energy facilities moving forward. The Premier has been very open in expanding the mandate of the committee so that we can correct the mistake that was made. The mistake was in how we were siting. We have admitted that that needs to be rectified, and the committee has the mandate to deal with that issue.

I would like the member from Renfrew to respond to the document I sent over, which is a legal agreement with respect to Oakville.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians want to trust that their government will put them first, but instead they see a government paying \$150 million to a hedge fund in the US when it could have put 25,000 young people to work. They see a government that's creating a new tax loophole to help wealthy corporations pay to wine and dine their customers, their clients, while at the same time they're asking Ontarians to pay more. They see a government that has told them it would cost \$190 million to cancel a gas plant and now it turns out it cost \$275 million. It's the same old status quo, the same old politics as usual here in Ontario. Does the Premier understand why this is a problem for people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear, and this is in response to the leader of the third party's question but it's in response to this situation. That is that as soon as I was appointed Premier we said that we were going to put in place a process that would allow every piece of information that was being asked for, that we would work to expand the mandate of committees so that all of the information could be made available.

The reality is that a political decision was made to cancel the gas plant. There was a cost associated with that. I regret that those decisions weren't made earlier. I wish that we had had a better process in place so that we weren't standing here in this situation today, that all of us wouldn't be in a situation where these costs had to be paid. The reality is, there was a cost to implementing the

decision that all the parties agreed with, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the questions are being answered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier has asked the civil service to use the term "new government," but I don't see much new: A government that still gives well-connected insiders billion-dollar tax breaks at the same time that families get asked to pay more; a Premier who has had months and months to set the record straight about the cost of the gas plants, but won't come clean.

People want to see the government put them first instead of putting insiders first. Does the Premier understand that people are frustrated with a government that says it's new but instead it's the same old status quo?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I'm not going to attempt to speak for every person in Ontario, but I really believe that what the people of Ontario want is, they want the answers—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is now going to be told that this is it.

Now, I want to refresh everyone's memory—stop the clock, please—and that is, when I say you are warned, you don't have any chances after that, just to be clear.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Am I warned?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Did I say it? Would you like me to? Fine. I'm just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We could go back and forth, but the point is very clear here. I have said this before and I'll say it again: This is a very difficult situation that we're trying to deal with. It deserves our attention, but it's not going to be at the sake of decorum, so let's keep it down.

Please finish, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much. The auditor has provided the Legislature with objective and independent information, an independent report, and that's as it should be. I believe that's what the people of Ontario deserve: to have an independent review of what was a political decision that had a cost associated with it. That's the reality.

I wish that we had made the decision earlier. We didn't, and we implemented a political decision that everyone—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What they don't deserve is a Liberal government that pays off US hedge funds instead of investing in jobs or strengthening health care in this province. They also don't deserve a government that's making life more affordable for the wealthiest corporations instead of making life more affordable for hard-working families. In fact, they're trying to figure out why the public—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's very unfair to the leader of the third party when I can't hear the question and the heckling is with the other party. Let's give them an opportunity to ask that question in a fair way.

Leader, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In fact, what they're trying to figure out is why the public should be on the hook to pay for decisions made by the Liberal Party for the benefit of the Liberal Party. They're tired of the denials. They're tired of the hidden information. They want the Premier to admit—that's all they want—that this was wrong, and to apologize. Will she do that, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that I regret that the decision wasn't made earlier, but I think it underestimates the people of Ontario to suggest that somehow we can say to them, or the leader of the third party can say, "We would have cancelled the gas plant and it wouldn't have cost a thing." That is a fantasy, and it's not fair to the people of Ontario to say that we can start an infrastructure project and we can cancel it and there will not be a cost associated with that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Kawartha Lakes—come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Halton is inches away from something he doesn't want to be.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm the Premier who asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation, Mr. Speaker. I said, "Let's open up the mandate of the committees." Let's make sure that they can ask all the questions that need to be asked. Let's make sure that all the information is available.

I regret that the decision wasn't made earlier, but the reality is that we all agreed that that decision should be made. We made it, we implemented it, and there was a cost associated with it.

DRUG FORMULATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People across the province were shocked by news that over 1,000 patients fighting cancer received diluted chemotherapy treatment over the last year, and they were shocked when they learned that the government hadn't provided any oversight while they let hospitals outsource that service.

Can the Premier tell us how many other companies are currently doing this mixing of drugs work and what oversight they're receiving right now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will speak to the specifics of this, but I just want to say that we have acted as quickly as possible to address this issue. It is absolutely unacceptable that it happened, and that's why we've got an expert panel that is reviewing the situation. That's why Dr. Jake Thiessen

is in place to give us advice, to make sure that this never happens again.

It should not have happened. There needed to be more oversight. We need to determine where in the system, if there is a systemic issue, there needs to be a change, and that's exactly what Dr. Thiessen will be talking to us about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, yesterday in committee officials from this government admitted that they still can't say how many companies are doing this kind of work and how many patients are potentially affected. People expect the health care system to provide them with reliable care when they need it. What does the Premier have to say to patients who want to know the drugs they are taking are safe and reliable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite knows, this is an issue we are taking very, very seriously. We have brought all the partners together, including Health Canada, to ensure that we can say with complete confidence that patients are getting the highest-quality drugs. The member also, I think, knows that Cancer Care Ontario went out to all of the hospitals, the 77 hospitals, in the province that deliver chemotherapy and made sure they did an audit of their drug supply to ensure that this was an issue that was not happening anywhere else, that this problem was confined to the four identified hospitals.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I was speaking not just specifically of chemotherapy, but drugs overall. I think the minister missed that point. In fact, her staff or the staff at the ministry could not answer that question in committee yesterday, and that's why I'm putting it to the Premier today, and to the minister.

It's a pretty basic issue. People facing some of the most frightening diseases that we can even imagine went to hospital for treatment. Hospitals assume that someone is providing oversight for the drugs that they're providing to those patients, and yet the government not only was not providing the oversight but still, weeks later, can't identify what they are supposed to be overseeing and whether there are other companies doing similar work in Ontario that they're supposed to be overseeing today, weeks after this incident occurred.

When is the Premier going to be able to provide us and the people of this province with some basic answers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Premier has made the commitment that we will give the College of Pharmacists the tools it needs to ensure the safety of the supply. That work is well under way.

I think it's important to acknowledge that this is not just an Ontario problem. In fact, we have a representative from New Brunswick sitting on our working group. I'm very pleased that the federal health minister yesterday did commit that, if the review determines that there is a

federal role, she will seriously consider any changes that are recommended to prevent this from happening again.

All of our health care providers and professions are focused on ensuring that we understand what happened here and that we can ensure that it does not happen again.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On Monday, the Auditor General found that the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant cost \$275 million. Minister, that's \$85 million more than the government claimed for months. Yesterday, when speaking to the media after question period, you said that this amount was already accounted for in the upcoming budget. If the government actually believed their own words that the cost of this self-serving decision was only 190 million taxpayer dollars, then how did you as finance minister budget for \$275 million in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows all too well, we accommodated \$190 million in our reports last year. The amounts going forward will be accommodated through the ratepayers, and we recognize that. More importantly, we are going, over a 20-year period—we make certain that the deficit is reduced by 2017-18, and we're on plan to do just that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The auditor has yet to release his report on the cancellation and relocation of the Oakville plant. Independent energy experts, including Bruce Sharp and Tom Adams, have testified that the costs associated with this politically motivated waste of taxpayer dollars could reach almost a billion dollars. Yesterday, outside this House, you told media that this sprawling mismanagement of funds was accounted for in your upcoming budget. This means that you know what cancelling the Oakville gas plant will cost and you need not wait for the Auditor General to uphold transparency in government.

Minister, will you be honest with the hard-working people of Ontario, restore some integrity to your Liberal government and release the true cost of saving Kevin Flynn's seat?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we'll await the Auditor General's report and we'll determine exactly what's there to be dealt with.

But this is what we are dealing with: We're dealing with a budget that's going to enable us to ensure that we grow our economy and balance our books. We have a plan to balance our books by 2017-18, and it's working. We've exceeded our targets four years in a row. We're three point some-odd billion dollars less than we anticipated.

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More importantly, jobs are being created and Ontario's fundamentals are strong. That's why more people are investing in Ontario than ever before, and that's why we're poised to do so much better.

What we require is collaboration and co-operation. All Ontarians expect that to be so. I would hope that you'll read the budget before you make your decision. Take a look at what we're doing; take a look at our path to balance. It's working, and you should be part of that as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Premier, over and over, your government has insisted that Ontarians were only going to spend \$190 million to cancel the Mississauga plant. As we know, it's \$275 million.

Yesterday when I asked Shelly Jamieson, former secretary of cabinet, if the Ontario Power Authority would have kept ministers and the government informed of the costs and risks that they were encountering, she answered very simply: "Yes."

Will the Premier admit that she and her ministers have known for a long time that the cost of the Mississauga cancellation was a lot more than 190 million bucks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a report from the Auditor General on Mississauga, and I understand the auditor in fact will be appearing in front of the committee today. The Premier has taken the step of asking the auditor to look into the Oakville situation and come forward with a costing there.

The interesting thing, though, is that both the Conservatives and the New Democrats promised to cancel both those plants, and we are very anxious to learn about their costing going into it. In fact, the Liberal members invited the NDP candidates to appear in front of the committee, as well as the Progressive Conservative candidates. Surprisingly, not a single one of them was available. So I hope that the honourable member will be encouraging his fellow NDP members who vehemently opposed both the Oakville and the Mississauga plants to come forward and talk about the type of costing that they undertook.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I take that deflection as a yes.

It's clear from testimony by senior civil servants and senior Ontario Power Authority staff that the ministry should know what it cost to cancel both Oakville and Mississauga.

In fact, Kristin Jenkins, a vice-president of the OPA, testified yesterday that there were ongoing communications between the OPA and the Ministry of Energy about the cost of cancellations.

This fall, a new Auditor General will give her or his assessment of the cost of the Oakville cancellation. How much does the Premier think it cost to cancel that Oakville plant?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the honourable member wants to hold committee hearings during question period. That's fine. But I think the honourable member is being a little bit mischievous in talking about these costs, that they are easily calculated.

He's interested in quoting Kristin Jenkins. Let me quote Kristin Jenkins and what she had to say about

costs: "There is savings associated with the location of these plants. I think it is important to take into account that there will be some savings that also need to be factored in when looking at the total cost."

The fact of the matter is, this is a complex issue. We have asked the Auditor General to look into it.

But again, the honourable member has ignored my question. Where were the NDP candidates? What costing were they looking at? What costing was the central party looking at? Will he encourage his NDP colleagues to come before the committee?

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. On Monday, the Auditor General reported that although the OPA reimbursed Greenfield \$4.2 million for the Mississauga plant site, it still allowed Greenfield to retain the title of the property.

I ask the Premier: If you purchased a new house, would you allow the previous owner to retain ownership of it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It is my understanding, and I believe it was also referred to in the Auditor General's report, that the actual site probably had a liability attached to it, rather than being an asset, in the sense that there was a lot of infrastructure on that site that would be very, very expensive to remove and it probably would be more expensive to retain it. Therefore, we let them keep it.

But the important issue is that the Auditor General has done his report. We have accepted the results of the Auditor General. The people of Ontario want to see some unity of purpose on the part of the three parties to move forward and determine how we can better site these projects.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there's always a smile from the member from Sarnia. He was smiling when it went to Sarnia-Lambton, and he was taking credit for moving that—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I want to remind members that while I'm speaking they're not supposed to be, and I also would like to remind members that the reason I ask you not to name persons' individual names is because it's a race to the bottom and not to the top. So let's start using their ridings. And for those members who are not in their seats, they're supposed to be really quiet.

Supplementary, please.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the Premier, and I would just now comment about the minister speaking—the "would" and "should." It's past that time. This is a report that we're looking at, and it's not supposed to be based on "woulds" and "shoulds."

But I want to go back to the Premier in my supplementary. It was her government, not the OPA, who controlled this process and the negotiations with Greenfield.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Your government did not have to allow Greenfield to retain the title. You are accountable for this mess. You were in power overseeing the fiasco as it happened. Will you take responsibility for this fiasco, as well as eHealth and Ornge?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I was saying towards the end of my first response to the question, the member for Sarnia has been extremely pleased and has taken credit for the relocation to go into his community. He has accepted the credit for creating jobs in his community. The reality is—

Interjections.

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

First, the member will withdraw. And if I hear that again from anybody, I'm going to throw you out.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the three parties made election promises to relocate the facilities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew knows better. The member from Renfrew knows that those kinds of props are not appreciated by any of us, and if he does it again, I'll throw him out. These kinds of challenges are definitely unfair to anybody.

Finish, please, Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think most people have forgotten the question by now, so I'll just sit down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, you want to challenge me. The member from Huron-Bruce is warned.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday, the committee looking at the diluted chemo drugs heard from their first witness. The deputy minister confirmed that the Ministry of Health doesn't know how widespread the outsourcing of cancer drugs is. The Ministry of Health doesn't know what companies are providing the drugs, and they can't comment whether the grey area of oversight is common within our health care system. This is disturbing to me and to a lot of Ontarians. Is the minister ready to admit the extent to which things have gone wrong under her leadership?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think everyone in this Legislature has the very same goal, and that goal is to get answers for patients, to understand what went wrong here, to make sure that this never happens again. That work is well under way.

I am very pleased that Health Canada has confirmed that it will exercise all of its existing legal authority to investigate Marchese Hospital Solutions, and I am hopeful that with Health Canada's co-operation, the College of Pharmacists will be able to obtain more information to inform its own decision.

Speaker, we have a strong commitment to understand what happened here, to learn any lessons that are to be learned from this experience and to ensure that it does not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
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M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, to make matters even worse, it seems that it never occurred to the Ministry of Health—the body ultimately responsible for oversight of our health care system—that all of these unknowns could lead to problems. The minister likes to say that she doesn't want to point fingers, but that's exactly what she's doing. Ontarians are sick and tired that health care keeps failing us and that the Ministry of Health keeps failing in its basic role of oversight—in its basic, primary responsibility of oversight.

Will the Minister of Health admit that she failed to do her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we not politicize this issue, and I think it's very important to acknowledge that we in Ontario have an excellent health care system. There is nowhere else in the world that has a stronger cancer care system. It is an excellent system; it is not a perfect system, but we strive to continually improve the care. When an issue comes before us, we move quickly. We are moving quickly on this issue. Many will argue that this is an issue that should be led by Health Canada. What I am saying is, I have a responsibility to Ontario patients; it's a responsibility I take very seriously. As Health Canada gets more engaged, I will be very pleased for—

Interjections.

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

New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the minister of economic development and employment.

Youth employment has been consistently lower than the general population, and our government identified this as a priority in the recent throne speech. With summer just around the corner, we know young people will be searching for meaningful employment that will help them develop the skills they will need to succeed in the future. Many young people in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt are looking for their first job to teach them

new responsibilities, time management and workplace practices. It also helps them to learn what to expect when entering the workplace full-time.

With just a few weeks from the summer—returning back home from post-secondary studies for the summer—can the minister please outline some of the great things our government is doing to help young people find meaningful summer employment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address this important issue. Of course, we identified youth employment in our throne speech as a priority for this government, and I believe that this is an important issue that all parties agree with us needs to be addressed. Every year, approximately 100,000 students here in Ontario find meaningful employment during the summer through our summer job strategy.

In my Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, our flagship summer employment opportunity for young people is called Summer Company. Youth involved in this program have over the years launched a tremendous array of businesses, including web development, lifeguarding, product sales, home renovation and environmental services—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —program is in its 13th year. Summer Company, last year alone, helped to launch 483 businesses with our young people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the update to the House on what the government is doing to create summer jobs for young people. The Summer Company program sounds like a great opportunity for young people to become young business entrepreneurs and business leaders.

At the recent hearings of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I heard about the needs of young people in northern and rural Ontario. I believe the youth in rural and northern Ontario wish to work outside, whether it is in a park or doing conservation work, or to gain experience in wildlife habitat.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he share with us examples of what employment opportunities this government has created for youth in northern and rural communities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for asking about this very important issue. The member will be pleased to hear that our government is continuing to provide great summer employment opportunities throughout the province, and that the ministry is the leading provider of youth employment in the Ontario public service, with over 1,900 summer jobs available. The positions range from field work, collecting data and wildlife rehabilitation to education initiatives or working in 100 provincial parks.

One of our most important programs is the Stewardship Youth Ranger Program, which provides 225 opportunities in 30 communities across Ontario. The rangers will be able to work in five-person teams in their local

communities on a wide range of varying environmental initiatives. Recent changes have been made to expand the eight-week program to allow a broader range of Ontarians to participate, with locations ranging from Guelph and Peterborough to Dryden and Moosonee.

We've also worked with school boards to help ensure that the knowledge gained through this program will allow students to earn secondary school co-op credits.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Energy have stood in this House and knowingly repeated erroneous figures in a campaign of confusion.

Yesterday, the Minister of Energy brought this government to a new low by having the gall to insist that Ontarians wait for—get this—yet another Auditor General's report, this time on the cancelled power plant in Oakville. This morning, the finance minister did the same thing. But Speaker, witness after witness, including the former secretary of cabinet, have testified under oath that the Premier and her cabinet know the full cost of cancelling the power plant in Oakville.

Meet the current Premier: same as the old one; same selfish Liberal agenda; same Liberal yes-men in cabinet; same tired old Liberal excuses.

Premier, enough of this shell game. Would you for once stand up for the taxpayers of Ontario, come clean, show some character and tell us the real cost of Oakville?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to remind the member opposite that I am the Premier who asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. I am not going to pre-empt that process; I am going to wait for that process because we need that independent review of the situation.

Since we're in this general area, I just want to make it clear to the members opposite, but I want to make it clear to the people sitting in the galleries, I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that I take responsibility for getting the information out; I take responsibility for a transparent process; and I take responsibility for learning from this process and making sure that, going forward, we have a much better process in place so that this does not happen again.

I really need people to be clear that I am not trying to abdicate responsibility. In fact, I said from the beginning: I understand it's our responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, if this is transparency, I have a very different—

Interjections.

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

Carry on.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, if this is transparency, I have a very different definition of what transparency is than this old Premier has.

Shelly Jamieson confirmed that cabinet was briefed on the “buckets of costs” related to cancelling both of these power plants.

If the Minister of Energy can't tell us what Oakville costs, there are three possible explanations for that. He either missed the briefing or wasn't paying attention; he told his staff not to brief him so he wouldn't have to tell this House; or he knows and refuses to be accountable on the floor of this Legislature. That means the minister is either incompetent, negligent or untrustworthy.

My question to the Premier is this: Why are any of those qualities good qualities for members of your cabinet?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Premier was right in asking the Auditor General to look into the Oakville relocation.

As I mentioned before, there is a memorandum of understanding on the website, but most importantly, there's a 500-page contract dealing with very technical issues, and the public is entitled to have an independent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's about it. Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The public is entitled to have an independent interpretation of that 500-page technical document. It was the right thing for the Premier to ask for an independent opinion, and we will await it.

Mr. Speaker, are they suggesting that we pre-empt the Auditor General's work by coming out with numbers now which they will then attack? To have a credible process in this Legislature, we need to wait for the Auditor General's report.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last May, the people of Thunder Bay saw the worst of nature and the best of their neighbours when massive flooding tore through their community. When the waters finally receded, people were left with wrecked basements and ruined possessions.

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I saw the devastation with my own eyes, and the Premier did too. She looked flood victims in the eye and promised them disaster relief assistance funding of up to \$3.2 million for private losses, saying, “This is the number that we think was necessary, but it may very well be that it has to be adjusted.”

Yesterday, the people of Thunder Bay found out that they're only going to be getting \$300,000. Does the Premier think it's a fair adjustment for people who have already lost so much?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of the Environment is going to want to comment on the details, but I will just say that at the time I was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I went to

Thunder Bay. We announced the disaster relief funding. If I recall correctly, it was up to \$17 million. I met with some of the communities surrounding Thunder Bay that also were going to get relief. My understanding is that that process is under way, that there are ongoing claims that are being filed, and that there's a discussion with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I will let the Minister of the Environment deal with the supplementary, but we were very clear that we were there with the people of the communities around Thunder Bay and in Thunder Bay to provide that disaster relief.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Thunder Bay are proud and they're tough. They don't back down from hardship and they don't ask for help until they've really tried to help each other out first. That's what they did.

After the floods, volunteers with the Thunder Bay Disaster Relief Committee raised \$1.5 million at fundraisers like dinner-dances and things like that—

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—absolutely, they deserve an applause for that—in order to help their neighbours.

In the past, the Ontario disaster relief program has given \$2 for every \$1 raised locally. Private damages from the flooding are pushing up to the \$4.2-million mark. The Premier had no qualms about spending \$275 million to save Liberal seats in the last election, so why is the government, in this situation in Thunder Bay, only offering 20 cents on the dollar to the people of that community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I just want to say that the two members from Thunder Bay, from Thunder Bay–Superior North and Thunder Bay–Atikokan, have worked diligently with the municipality and with our government to make sure that the money flowed to people in the community. I am so clear that the disaster relief fund that is in place is available to the people in the community. If there are anomalies, if there are situations where the applications haven't been followed up on or if there is more work that needs to be done, I know that the members will work with the minister to make sure that happens. We were crystal clear, when I was the minister and I was there, that there were many, many people who would qualify for relief and that the municipality would qualify for relief. So I'll certainly be talking to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make sure that all of that is in place, but our commitment to the people who are affected by the flooding—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. This government's dedication and commitment to transit is unprecedented. I see signs of this every day in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. For instance, when I'm driving from my constituency office to my home, I always see the new

BRT station that's opening up along Central Parkway and the 403: more evidence of the good work and the great public transit system that we are building in Mississauga thanks to this Liberal government.

Minister, could you speak to the BRT and tell us a little bit about how this is going to help the residents of Mississauga?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member. I can again tell this is a question on transit because it's coming from behind me. One day there will be one from across the way. I know it. I go to bed every night and pray that someone will ask me a question.

I'm going to guess that the member also knows that we have some amazing BRT programs because, unlike the members opposite, she knows how to use a clicker. She goes to websites. She reads energy MOUs. She reads the budget. She can do all kinds of things Tories can't do. It's truly amazing.

We're getting, in fact, 18 kilometres of two-lane grade-separated road from Winston Churchill Boulevard to Renforth, and that is 12 dedicated stops in the great city of Mississauga. Mayor McCallion is working with us. She's taking on zoning initiatives to make it a walkable, friendly community. We're very proud of our relationship with Mississauga.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update. Now, the bus rapid transit isn't the only thing that's going on in Mississauga; there's a lot more. There's one initiative that I am particularly interested in for my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville, and that is about the light rail transit that's going to go across Hurontario, which is smack in the middle of my riding. Could you please tell us, Minister, what Metrolinx has on the books for Mississauga when it comes to light rail transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Again, my very literate friend from Mississauga knows that we have not one, not two, not seven, not 11, but 15—I almost have as many critics in opposition—15 major infrastructure projects going on. One of them that is planned is the Hurontario LRT.

This is a very vital piece because the third-largest commercial office cluster right now in Canada is in Mississauga, from the Airport Executive Park. Mississauga has emerged as one of the most dynamic commercial centres—employment centres—in Canada, and we are going to be building an LRT there so people can get to work. It will connect to our GO lines, it will help build the transportation capacity for the urbanization and renewal of downtown Mississauga led by the city and by the city council, and we're glad to have—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is for the Premier. I'd like to have a conversation with the Premier, a conversation about the truth, a conversation about integrity and accountability. The Premier and her scandal-plagued

government are failing Ontario once again by putting their own selfish interests ahead of the taxpayers. The Premier's empty rhetoric about her so-called new government rings hollow.

There's nothing new about this government. Just like the Dalton McGuinty government, Premier Wynne has chosen to bury the costs of the Oakville power plant cancellation. She's chosen to avoid accountability by knowingly parroting incorrect information.

So I ask her this: Given her record, why should anyone trust her? Why should the people of Ontario believe a word she says?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Talk about parroting, with that question over there. But, you know, we've heard a lot about Bruce Sharp, who came before the legislative committee looking into this. Listen to what Bruce Sharp, a noted energy expert that the opposition loves to go on and on about—this is what he had to say. He said, "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

The Premier of this province, when she came in, asked the Auditor General to expand his investigation beyond Mississauga and look into Oakville. The Auditor General is undertaking this work. It is complex work; it is a complex file. Again, the way the opposition talks, I'm very, very much looking forward to their candidates coming forward and talking about their costing in the last election, Mr. Speaker, but they won't appear before the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Premier, with due respect, the people of Ontario want to hear from you, not your sidekick on this.

We know the government knows the truth and isn't sharing it with Ontarians. The Premier and her House leader can attempt to spin this every which way they please, but the facts remain clear: Cabinet was briefed on the various buckets of costs by the cabinet secretary, and they know the cost of the Oakville cancellation, just like they knew the cost of scrapping Mississauga all long. The Premier and her accomplices over there in cabinet know the truth.

The question is simple: Why not end this now, Premier? Why not end this now? Save yourself the misery, come clean and tell the truth, if you can handle it.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's take a minute to review the facts. The Progressive Conservative Party opposed the plants; we cancelled them; they screamed foul. The Progressive Conservative Party said they wanted to get to the bottom of the situation. We offered a select committee of the Legislature; they turned it down. The Progressive Conservative Party has gone on and on about access to documents. We offered to produce every single document government-wide, a much broader collection of documents that had ever been requested, and the honour-

able members across the way sat there and voted against it.

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I was told the other day that perhaps my analogy to a certain book was a bit saucy, so I'll say that when it comes to the gas plants, they have more positions than a yoga instructor.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Music, as you know, is a critical part of a well-rounded education, and wealthy students can afford music lessons outside of the school system. I dare say that 95% of Ontario families depend on public schools to provide good-quality music instruction for their kids. The Premier knows this because when she was a trustee she fought hard to keep music programs in the school system, and so did you. Why then, today, is the provincial government pushing the Toronto District School Board to cut back music instruction in strings, band, vocals and steel drums at 300 Toronto elementary schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to emphasize that in fact we do think that instruction in the arts is extremely important, not just in music but also in the visual arts. Because that is very important to us, we actually fund instruction in all the arts through the School Foundation Grant.

It might interest you to know that the Toronto District School Board actually receives over \$1.2 billion in the School Foundation Grant to hire teachers to deliver programs, which include the arts. The arts, in fact, are part of the regular curriculum, and we expect that teachers will deliver the regular curriculum as it is set out in the provincial curriculum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The problem is that the government gives one bag of money but expects 10 bags of service. That one bag of money is not enough. That's why boards, as you know, have been cutting back on so many areas, including physical education, home economics and industrial arts, and cuts to the arts program, cuts to music in the past, cuts to ESL programs and deferred maintenance programs, including reading recovery. Today we hear they're going to cut back again on music instruction. The money simply is not enough to provide all these services.

When will the Premier start taking action to protect access to music education for elementary students in Toronto instead of pressuring the TDSB to cut music programs in their schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, we actually have recognized that one bag, as the member called it, or more accurately the School Foundation Grant, as I referred to it, isn't adequate. That's why, when the Premier was Minister of Education, she began the funding of additional funding for elementary specialist teachers. In fact, the Toronto District School Board has received funding for

628 specialist teachers at elementary so that they can provide the services that you have outlined: arts, music, visual arts and the other subjects that you mentioned. That is exactly why we provided Toronto and other school boards with funding for elementary specialist teachers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the dedicated Minister of Consumer Services. Spring has finally arrived, and many homeowners are thinking about possible renovations that they might want to do to their homes. Renovations and small construction projects are great ways to stimulate the local economies and also tend to employ locals, and people buy materials locally.

Many tend to hold back on these projects as they hear horror stories from some of their neighbours, families and friends about their own renovation projects. Across the province we've heard some of the stories of some contractors leaving in the middle of a project, work not being done to an expected level or consumers being held hostage for more money to complete a project. It's because of these horror stories that I'm looking toward you, Minister, for an answer on how the ministry responds to such stories.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Indeed, and unfortunately, this is an issue that the ministry faces on a constant basis. I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for asking the question.

This is the time of year when many families and homeowners are embarking on home renovations. Home renovations are constantly on the top 10 list of complaints at the Ministry of Consumer Services. The complaints, just to share with the House, range in topics. They include things like: quality of service, failure to provide service, not honouring contracts, services not performed. It's important to note that the ministry does take these complaints seriously, not just in educating consumers, as we do, but in investigating complaints.

I encourage all consumers to ensure that they are aware of their rights and arm themselves with the information, if they need it, from my ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear that consumers have somewhere to turn when they find themselves in a terrible situation.

Can the minister, through you, Speaker, please share with us what precautions homeowners can take beforehand and how can we help ease their fears when they are considering a home renovation or repair project?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm always happy to share information on how people can be more informed and knowledgeable consumers. First, as we know, consumers need to be aware that a written contract is always the best line of defence, and under the law, any job worth more than \$50 has to have a written contract. That's something a lot of people don't know.

Second, as for details of the contract, the materials being used, the terms, the payment, all those kinds of details—and if there is agreement between the consumer and the contractor, that estimate can indeed become the contract.

Consumers should be aware they have a right to cancel work if it's not started within 30 days of when it was promised in the agreement, and consumers should remember they cannot be charged more than 10% above the amount specified in their contract unless they agree to a change. It's also recommended, of course, that some of the payment be held back until the work is completed.

Again, I encourage people to contact my ministry for more information.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to correct something that I said today. The Oakville TransCanada Energy relocation contract is 212 pages long.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member does have a right to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it disconcerting that almost every time anything is happening in the House now, there's got to be some heckling. Come on. It's silly.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'd like to correct my record as well. During debate on Bill 34, when I pointed out that the Minister of Transportation was not aware that GO buses were ordered without seat belts, I mistakenly referred to the fact that they were safety belts, but the truth is that the minister was not aware of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You almost had me on a correct-the-record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to mention that we have the former member of provincial Parliament from the riding of York South–Weston here, John Nunziata—the brother of city councillor Frances Nunziata.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests here.

A point of order for the member of Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: They arrived a little bit late, but I'd like to welcome the group from Prince Edward county that are here. They are the POOCH group, Patrons of Our County Hospital. They'll be rallying outside the Legislature against government cuts—

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

USE OF PROPS IN THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, I'm glad that we have everyone here. There is one thing. I have now an understanding that there could be some members holding up insulting signs or any kind of props. This is not the one that I wanted to talk to the member from Renfrew on; I already dealt with that.

This is other members who may be holding up things that are not only unparliamentary but really below what the members all here, who are classified as honourable, would do. If I do find it, I will act swiftly and I will act decisively if I am actually witnessing such activities, and I would admonish anyone that would do that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAJESTA TREES OF KNOWLEDGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to bring attention to the Majesta Trees of Knowledge contest that is currently under way. The competition provides schools with an opportunity to win \$20,000 towards the building of a customized outdoor classroom.

Our Lady of Sorrows school from Petawawa in my riding submitted a plan for their outdoor classroom and was selected as one of just 10 finalists all across Canada. In making their submission, Our Lady of Sorrows had to design an outdoor learning space that would help educate their students and the public to the importance of working in concert with nature and understanding the benefits of a healthy natural environment.

As of today, Our Lady of Sorrows is in second place behind only a school from Saint John, New Brunswick. Petawawa is a lovely community. It's home to CFB Petawawa, which of course is home to the largest military base in Canada and the men and women of the Canadian Forces who protect our interests, both at home and abroad.

We're now in the final stretch of the Majesta competition, which ends on April 26. I would ask all of you, and everyone out there in Ontario, to go to majestatrees-ofknowledge.ca, take a look at the video they've prepared and then cast your vote for Our Lady of Sorrows. In that video, you'll see celebrity endorsements from former Our Lady of Sorrows student, Ben Rutz, one of Canada's finest fiddlers, and also Wojtek Wolski of the NHL's Washington Capitals.

Between now and April 26, you have the opportunity to vote once a day. If everyone across Ontario casts their vote for Our Lady of Sorrows for the Majesta Trees of Knowledge, I can assure you that on April 26 they will be victorious and they will have their outdoor classroom to show respect and knowledge of the natural environment. Let's go, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have made a comment—I think it was yesterday—about heckling people making statements. So we'll make sure that we maintain that wonderful, high, dignified level.

Members' statements.

CLEMENTINE NG

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to note the passing yesterday of Clementine Ng. People in this city live better because of Clementine's work. She was a hotel worker, an activist, a proud member of Unite Here Local 75. She was passionate in her commitment to the well-being of working people and of seniors. Whenever there was a rally for justice for the women and men working in hotels, she would be there. She would walk many kilometres in summer heat or winter's cold to support people who needed a decent wage and respect on the job.

She was tireless. Whenever I would go to seniors' events in my riding, she would be there, fundraising for seniors' services and lobbying for better pensions. Her heart was devoted to the betterment of people's lives.

I want to express condolences to her husband, Peter, and to her brothers and sisters at Local 75. They will miss her, as will I.

Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for a minute of silence to mark the passing of Clementine Ng.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Toronto–Danforth has asked for a moment of silence. I understand the member has to depart, so I'm going to ask for it to happen now, which is unorthodox, but I've spoken to the member. He's seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence on the passing. Agreed? Agreed.

Please stand.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements?

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE
MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place on February 6, 1952. On that day, she became the Queen of Canada, and Canadians have thanked her for her dedicated years of service. On February 22, I was proud to host a very special ceremony to honour Her Majesty for her service to our country in a tangible way, and to celebrate the deserving members of my community who have devoted themselves to the well-being of family, to community and to country. This Diamond Jubilee Medal commemorates Queen Elizabeth II's 60 years on the throne and pays tribute to her many years of service to our country. Each of the award recipients are outstanding citizens who have made exceptional contributions to their communities, to their province and to our country of Canada.

I would like to recognize here today Master Warrant Frank Atyeo, Bob Bak, Joe Grando, Rose Marciano, Peter Marcucci, Nick Pacione, Linda Paternostro and

Tony Pronto as recipients of the Diamond Jubilee Medal, and take this moment to thank each of these individuals for their hard work, their dedication and their outstanding service. It is because of the work of individuals such as these that our province is the very best place to live in Canada.

RAILWAY CITY BREWING CO.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Railway City Brewing Co. on having their signature Dead Elephant Ale voted as the Legislature's featured bold-flavoured ale for the fourth year in a row.

Railway City Brewing Co. set up shop five years ago in St. Thomas. Their signature labels, Iron Spike and Dead Elephant Ale, embody St. Thomas's railway past and, of course, reference the story of the renowned show elephant, Jumbo, who met his untimely demise on the very tracks of our fine town.

Railway City has produced a number of unique, flavourful products that have won over craft beer enthusiasts across the province. Their success is a direct result of their dedication to craftsmanship and an uncompromising focus on quality. The brewery has currently announced expansion plans which will create jobs and allow them to produce more of their fine product.

I'd like to just make a note that their cranberry ale at Christmastime is a favourite of friends and relatives of mine, and I surely help their profit during that time.

I encourage everyone here to sample St Thomas's finest ale, and once again congratulate Railway City Brewing on winning over the MPPs of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not only does the current member support, but a previous Speaker in this place used to support the St. Thomas—

Interjection: And still does.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And still does.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Miss Monique Taylor: On Monday of this week, a worker was killed on the job in Hamilton. He was struck by a metal bin as he carried out his duties. Unfortunately, this terrible tragedy is not an isolated incident. The Ministry of Labour reported there were 22 deaths and 678 critical injuries in the industrial sector last year. Each year across Canada, we average 1,000 workplace-related deaths.

This worker's death comes less than two weeks before the international Day of Mourning that we mark each year on April 28. It is a day when we pause to remember those who went to work and didn't come home, or perhaps brought home a deadly disease from their workplace. It is a day when we mourn for the dead and recommit to fight for the living. It is a day where we can reflect on the importance of Harry Arthurs's recommendations to the WSIB, such as indexing pensions so that

injured workers do not descend into devastating poverty through no fault of their own.

The Day of Mourning was started by the Canadian Labour Congress 30 years ago. It has now spread across the world, and is recognized in 80 countries.

I encourage all members to take part in their local Day of Mourning ceremonies, as they will be held across the country.

In solidarity, we mourn for the dead and fight for the living.

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This past weekend, three different minor hockey teams brought Ontario Hockey Federation titles home to Mississauga.

The Mississauga Jets defeated the Brantford 99ers 3-2, playing in Sault Ste. Marie to win the Bantam AA championship.

The Port Credit Storm shut out the host Niagara Falls Canucks 3-0 for the Bantam A Ontario title.

And the Mississauga Rebels won the Pee wee AAA championship Friday night in Thunder Bay, with a 6-4 win over the Nickel City Sons.

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The Ontario Hockey Federation Midget A Championships were held this past weekend at Vic Johnston arena in Streetsville. On Friday, Lisgar resident Johnny Bower dropped the puck to start the tournament. Johnny is the last living Toronto Maple Leaf goalie to hoist the Stanley Cup.

Mississauga's Lorne Park Ojibwa did not prevail at Streetsville, though prior to the Friday night opening game, I was able to put on my goalie equipment and take two rounds of warm-up shots with both Lorne Park and the Quinte West Hawks.

Hockey teaches young players to work as a team, to get along with each other, and to respect the other side.

Congratulations to our three 2013 championship Mississauga minor hockey clubs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Brantford 99ers went easy on you.

MILOS RAONIC

Mr. Peter Shurman: On April 7, Thornhill's own Milos Raonic won the fourth Davis Cup quarter-final match between Canada and Italy in Vancouver. Raonic's victory over Andreas Seppi gave him a 3-1 series advantage, and advances Canada to the Davis Cup semifinals. This is an historic and unprecedented win for Canada as it is the first time our country has even played in the quarter-finals at the Davis Cup.

Raonic is the highest-ranked men's singles tennis player in Canadian history. His love of the game began in Thornhill. His success has inspired many people of all ages and revitalized the game. Raonic's dedication and perseverance are important lessons that we can all learn from. A team player both on and off the courts, he has

created the Milos Raonic Foundation to help children overcome economic and physical barriers, with a focus on kids with physical disabilities and those in need of prosthetic devices.

I would like to congratulate Milos Raonic for continuing to represent Thornhill and our country with great pride on the world stage. Last November, I was honoured to present a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal to Thornhill's own international tennis star. Our community stands behind him, and we wish him continued success in the Davis Cup championship final in November and beyond.

COUNT ME IN

Ms. Dipika Damerla: This morning, I was greeted by an unusual sound as I walked into the Living Arts Centre. It was the sound of whoops of joy and excitement, and that's because the auditorium at the Living Arts Centre was full of 1,500 teenagers. They were there to attend a conference called Count Me In. The philosophy of Count Me In is empowering our young. It was fantastic to see that all these kids had organized this conference from scratch. Everything there had been done by teenagers, students from grade 8 to grade 12. It was some kind of a mix between a party and an entertainment festival and a trade show of volunteerism, because it was an opportunity for these students to actually shop around and see where they could volunteer. What a great idea to have all these not-for-profits together at the Living Arts Centre and a chance for teenagers to see first-hand where they would like to fit in.

To me, the most remarkable thing was the fact that the entire Count Me In conference had been organized by kids.

In particular, I would like to recognize the founder, Shane Feldman; Jaclyn Grossman; Jake Nothdurft; Nicole Richie; and Shane Karkheck.

With these kids, I can tell you that Ontario's future is in good hands.

LOW WATER LEVELS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A very serious economic issue is confronting the communities and businesses on the shores of Georgian Bay. The declining water levels in the Great Lakes, particularly in Michigan and Huron, are having a devastating impact.

With all-time-low water levels, Georgian Bay marinas are being forced to dredge their harbours at the cost of tens of millions of dollars. Without the dredging, it will mean that marinas cannot operate and tourism dollars, including those from the Trent-Severn Waterway, will simply not flow this year. This will severely impact provincial coffers.

Even the Chi-Cheemaun ferry will not likely be able to operate this year between Tobermory and Manitoulin because of the low water levels.

Water intakes of municipal water systems are at risk of being exposed to damage.

Our First Nations brothers and sisters of Beausoleil First Nation are at risk of not having a ferry service to their homes on Christian Island.

We have a Great Lakes Protection Act that doesn't even address the water levels and economic opportunities.

We also have your Liberal regional tourism organizations that are useless at providing leadership assistance at a time when our tourism communities are having a very difficult time.

I ask Premier Wynne and the Ontario government to take a leadership role in a fashion similar to the state of Michigan. Please work with me and our community leaders. Without leadership assistance, many marine operators simply will not be able to last past this boating season. We need Premier Wynne to meet with business leaders and work with politicians at all levels of government to help save our boating industry on Georgian Bay.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia / Projet de loi 54, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie d'Alzheimer et élaborant une stratégie de traitement et de prévention de la maladie d'Alzheimer et d'autres formes de démence et de recherche en la matière.

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.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The act establishes the Alzheimer Advisory Council for the purpose of considering matters related to informal caregivers and persons with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia and making recommendations to the minister.

The minister is responsible for developing and implementing a strategy respecting research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The minister is required to take into consideration the reports of the Alzheimer Advisory Council and the Ontario Health Quality Council to contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy. The act

states the government of Ontario's undertaking to address issues related to Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the use of psychiatric medication on children especially children in care or provincial custody; and

"Whereas it is an established scientific fact that psychiatric drugs cause shrinkage and related problems to with the development of the still-developing brain; and

"Whereas it is our responsibility as a society to protect and care for our children;

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

"To create a policy statement discouraging the use of psychiatric drugs on children and send it to all Ontario clinics and mental health care facilities working with children;

"To actively monitor the rate of use of psychiatric drugs on children to ensure that it is going down;

"To amend the professional misconduct regulation under the Medicine Act so that prescribing medication to children where the use of such medication has not been specifically approved by Health Canada for their age group and purpose constitutes professional misconduct, also to alter OHIP practices such that such use is not covered."

I affix my signature in full support.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

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“Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

“Whereas the commission’s report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

“Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

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

“To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401.”

I fully support the petition and give it to Jason.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great amount of people from all across the province of Ontario, and it’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship’s eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

“Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present the petition on their behalf.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, sent to me from the good folks in Timmins.

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children’s aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children’s aid societies.”

Mr. Speaker, I couldn’t agree with this more. I will affix my name to it, as I have to the many hundreds before, and give it to page Theodore to take to the Clerk.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This petition is from the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the private children aid’s society (CAS) corporations and the courts of Ontario consume billions of Ontario’s taxpayers’ dollars each year; and

“Whereas there has never existed any public oversight such as that exercised by the public via the utilization of the freedom-of-information requests processes over these indescribably powerful entities; and

“Whereas the damage, much of it claimed to be gratuitous, done to children and families by the CASs and the courts can be extreme, irrevocable and effect life-long terrible consequences; and

“Whereas the freedom-of-information request process is one of the public’s most utilized and effective tools in regard to affecting transparency and accountability on the government and their ‘institutions’;

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

“We respectfully petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly to make changes to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) which would result in the CASs and the courts of Ontario designated as ‘institutions’ as per the FIPPA so that we the public may request only certain and specific types of records from those entities.”

I approve of this and I sign my signature to this petition. I will give it to page Jason.

AIR-RAIL LINK

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

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by up to 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and I'm going to give it to Rabail to be delivered to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I have received thousands of signatures for this particular petition, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

“Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill.”

I totally agree with this particular petition and I affix my signature.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I agree with this petition. I have signed my name to it and give it to page Nicholas.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Callum.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, I have another petition from the great people of Manitoulin Island and Gore Bay, Kagawong, Evansville and M'Chigeeng.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses, and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

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

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I agree with this petition and I will present it to page Jason.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas municipalities are required to produce official plans that are compliant with the Places to Grow Act and the provincial growth plan; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario prescribes population growth and intensification targets throughout the provincial growth plan that must be met by municipalities; and

“Whereas even if the designated growth and intensification numbers are met, they are deemed to be minimum numbers; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board may approve densities to be located in areas not identified in the official plan, resulting in significant additional cost to the municipality because of required changes to long-term infrastructure plans, and also disrupts the character of existing communities;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

“(1) The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality’s official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space.

“(2) The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality.”

I affix my signature. Speaker, this bill will be debated tomorrow afternoon.

1530

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on April 30, 2012; and

“Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and \$1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province if the program is scrapped entirely; and

“Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

“Whereas this decision is just another attack by the McGuinty-Wynne government on rural Ontario and struggling agricultural communities;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that” this “government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and \$1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems....”

I agree with this and will send it down with Addison to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

“Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill.”

As I am in favour of this, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Jason.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2013, on the motion for second reading of Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This debate ended with the member from Davenport. We’ll now go into two-minute responses.

Questions and comments? The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me just say that I think that the Minister of Agriculture and Food has just come up with a fantastic bill to place a much higher emphasis as to how important local foods are to each and every one of us. We’re all familiar with our marketplaces in every community, large and small, and how actively our local producers produce the good vegetables and fruits that we all enjoy, starting right about this time of the year but particularly in the fall of the year.

It is about time that we here in Ontario continue taking great pride in the local foods that are being produced in Ontario, and what this bill does, amongst other things, is it really promotes and celebrates the good things that are grown and made in Ontario.

I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Food's critics in the opposition parties agree with this and will be totally supportive of this bill. Now, as we know, they may have a few good, positive amendments to make to the bill. But at the end of the day, both the member from Oxford, who is the critic for the official opposition, and his close relative, the member from Timiskaming, who's the food critic for—

Interjection: Nephew.

Hon. John Gerretsen: He's your nephew? Okay. Your nephew, the critic for the NDP, will have some good, positive contributions to make this bill even better than it is.

But, you know, a lot of things have already happened with respect to this bill, and the consultation process that was started by the good Minister of Agriculture and Food will continue. At the end of the day, we should all take great pride in the food that's produced here in Ontario, and we should make the rest of the world aware of that as well, Speaker.

I look forward to the debate that's about to ensue right about now.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Speaker. I much appreciate the opportunity to stand up and talk and comment not only on the Attorney General's comments but on the legislation.

You see, Speaker, some of the aspects—and I probably bring a different perspective forward when you talk about the local foods component. This is the start of a season, and many individuals in the House may not be realizing this, where a lot of the wild, natural foods that are out there, whether it's fiddleheads, which are a great opportunity—most of the fiddleheads in Ontario actually come from New Brunswick. We need to ensure that these fiddleheads—and for those who don't know about fiddleheads, they're ostrich ferns. As well, there are other things such as wild leeks. I know there are a number of locations around where wild leeks are available and they're a great opportunity. I had permission to pick wild leeks with some of my boys, and we tried to get them to find a marketplace that they could retail these wild leeks.

So you've got a number of other aspects out there that we need to look at in how it's going to be marketed and how we can promote those sorts of aspects, whether it's wild leeks and fiddleheads—and there are a couple of other things. First the wild leeks will be up, and then the fiddleheads. After that, you're going to get a number of other things as well—bulrushes or the cattails that are out there. For individuals who haven't tried them, they're actually rather interesting to have. You have to get them before they break through the leaves, when they're in the husk, and you peel it off like a cob of corn and you boil it and add salt and butter on it and it's actually a great thing.

I think the thing I'm trying to point out here is that we need to make sure that we take all of these things into consideration when we're bringing legislation forward

and look at some other aspects. Whether it's wild mushrooms, fiddleheads, bulrushes, cattails or wild leeks and some of the other things Ontario has to offer, hopefully we can all work together to make sure it's a much better province.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand here. I'd like to make some comments on my colleague from Davenport's remarks yesterday, as well as the Attorney General and the member from Oshawa.

But I'd like to focus on my colleague from Davenport. We both spoke yesterday about the Local Food Act. He had a totally different view because he had an urban view, something a lot of farmers don't understand. Farmers are constantly frustrated because usually urban people don't understand us. My seatmate and I have a unique perspective because we can—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Together.

Mr. John Vanthof: Not really together, but we have reasoned arguments, actually, and I think together we can come up with some pretty good amendments to a very lazy bill. Because it's great to celebrate local food, and there is a lot of local food, but it would be nice to put legislation together that actually really did something to help that along, to not only increase people's awareness but their ability to get local food. So far, what we've seen from this bill is an attempt from the government to get ahead of the local food parade and take credit for it. You know what? There's more to governing than just taking credit for other people's work—way more.

So, yes, we are going to support this bill going to committee and, yes, we're going to try and make it into a real bill instead of a press release.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate all the members who spoke before me, but particularly the member from Davenport. I hope Grandma Grace is watching here today.

You speak about the educational sector. One of the aspects in the bill is what we, as a government, are trying to do here. We're going to look at requesting and perhaps directing ministries to consider procuring local foods, up to \$25,000. We're going to be looking at that.

1540

But at the same time, we've got to be mindful, as a government, as to what our trade obligations are. I know that previously the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had talked about a previous bill that was introduced by the leader of the third party, but as a government, we found that that was too prescriptive. Some of the targets that were put in there would indeed affect our ability with regard to trade. We have to make sure that whatever we put forward in this House enables fair trade. We export; Ontario farmers, producers and processors export a considerable amount of produce to other jurisdictions. As a result, I think we've hit this right on the head. The nail

has been hit perfectly. It's beginning the discussion as to where we want to go.

I'm not saying there's no need for improvement, Mr. Speaker. There is always some need for improvements in any legislation that's put forward. That's why it's good to hear that the third party, or particularly that member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, is going to support this bill and try to get it to committee.

I just want to say in conclusion that I know quite a bit about local foods, Mr. Speaker. I was a manager for a local bakery in Alexandria, and I worked hard to ensure that local foods were on the shelves in our major retailers as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport has two minutes.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks to all members who contributed to the debate here. Specifically, thank you to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for welcoming Grandma Grace to the discussion today. Good afternoon.

Speaker, we did have a good discussion here. My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane put forward a number of concerns that affect farmers in Ontario. Those concerns have to be listened to in this Legislature. We said quite clearly that this is a bill that is very empty. There's not much in it. Yet I do think it is an opportunity for people around this province to rally, to talk about food, because that's a discussion that has to happen in this Legislature.

I think once again we see that the people of Ontario are far out in front of the legislators in this building when it comes to food issues. People have real concerns about their food, their food safety, the future of food in this province, about supporting farmers and protecting farmland in Ontario. Speaker, it's not something that we hear about in here. This bill gives us the opportunity to have the discussion. It's a bill that I will be supporting, that New Democrats will support. We do need to get it to committee, and at that point, I would really encourage food stakeholders from across Ontario to join the discussion and put forward some real concrete proposals.

I put some of those proposals forward yesterday that I've heard. I would like to hear further debate in this chamber. I think too often we don't actually have debate in here. Why don't we have food education in our schools? Is that a good idea? I think it's a good idea. People I speak to think that's a good idea. I'd like to hear from other members if that's something we should have. Should we have food education opportunities in our schools? Should we have a garden in every school that grows food? Should we be using our kitchens in schools again to teach students food skills? These are good ideas, but these are actual ideas with some substance—something this bill, at this point, does not have. Could we talk about some of these ideas, please? Because there's a long way we need to go when it comes to food, but we're just getting started here.

I'm looking forward to more discussion. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to rise today to speak about our new Local Food Act, a bill, I think, Mr. Speaker, that is a positive signal to the agri-food sector right across the province of just how important I think all of us here in this Legislature and this government believe our agriculture industry is to each and every Ontarian.

This bill was put forward by our Premier, which is something that we don't normally get to say in this Legislature, because it is sort of unusual for the Premier to take on a portfolio on their own, in addition to the responsibilities of being Premier. I think the fact that our Premier has taken on the extra responsibility of being the Minister of Agriculture and Food is an indication that our government and our Premier take agriculture issues very seriously.

We want to send out the message to all involved in the sector, people in rural and urban Ontario, that this is a critical sector. It's a critical sector in terms of providing us with important product for our families to eat. It's a critical sector, though, as well when it comes to building a strong economy.

Agriculture has long been an important part of Ontario's economy in the past and it is today. But if you look at the future of agriculture in our economy—and I'll talk a little bit about that later—it is incredibly important to our economic future, because this is that next-generation economy. We have agri-food businesses across this province that are at the cutting edge of innovation, that are global leaders in our agri-food industry, which I don't think get talked about as often as they should be. I may well bring some examples later on in my comments of some of those really great Ontario success stories, because those companies—those Ontarians—have really earned our respect.

I don't think of this as being a rural issue. I think that in the past that's sometimes the way we kind of looked at agriculture, as a rural issue. I don't see it that way. I know we always talk about this rural-urban divide in the province, and you sometimes see that come into this place a little bit. We have the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell back here who serves a very strong agriculture area. We have the member—I can never remember all of his riding name—the Minister of Community and Social Services and former Minister of Agriculture. If I state his riding name it will take up so much time that I won't have time to make a point, but the former Minister of Agriculture also serves an area where he's very much attached to the agriculture sector.

The member for Oxford is here as well, and I very much respect his views on agriculture. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was participating earlier, before I spoke. I've been up to his community and I've seen—Ontarians would be surprised at how, way up in Timiskaming, somehow or other they've been able to make agriculture work and grow product up there. It is a huge Ontario success story, and they've had to work very hard to do that. It hasn't been easy, but they've worked very hard to do that. I look forward to his views as well.

I know the job of opposition is to be critics. That's why we call them critics of our legislation. Their job is to critique what we're doing as a government and try to make it better. But I also think that our critics here today, in their heart of hearts, believe this is a good thing to do. They might want us to do other things. They might want us to make it stronger. They might have other ideas that should be included in this legislation. In some cases they probably have some really good ideas as to how we can move forward. But I think they would agree that this is another positive step forward when it comes to the importance of recognizing the relevance of local food in our lives.

This is something that hasn't always been talked about, but families across Ontario more and more today are recognizing that local food is a much better way to feed our families. Again, I say this isn't a rural-urban issue.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm trying to listen to the member from Oxford heckling me, but I can't hear what he's saying.

I think it was last Easter holiday that my wife and I had time to kill. She said, "We've got to go out"—she grew up in the Clarington area, and she loves going to those markets out there. There's a market out in Clarington called White Feather Farms, which we visited. I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was absolutely jam-packed, and I almost guarantee you that most of the people there were probably urban dwellers who were going out to get some respite from the city and at the same time pick up some fresh product for their families. It was actually quite a nice outing. It was a great location. We got some great fresh food to bring home to our boys to eat. Our boys are athletes; they need that fresh food, those fresh vegetables and fruits and those kinds of things.

When I see farmers' markets like that—this is really a market, but it's fresh food; it's local food that's grown there—they're so successful and they're always packed. I think that speaks to the demand in Ontario for this great product that we produce here in Ontario.

I also think that this is important to rural and urban dwellers alike, because it's so important to our economy to promote our agriculture and agri-food sectors in Ontario. I remember during my time as Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, having the opportunity to travel out to Cobourg—and the critics may be familiar with this company called Bakkavor Foods. It's a company that set up their national headquarters in Cobourg. They produce fresh food that they then market through, I believe, the Loblaws chain across Canada, but their head office and their operations are out of Cobourg. They plan to start in Ontario and they're going to go across Canada, and then they plan to market to the US. They're creating hundreds of jobs in Cobourg today, and I'm very delighted that we were able to help them out with a grant from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund some time ago, which helped get them up and going and attracted them to the Cobourg area.

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That's an example of a company that's looking at the cutting edge of where demand is going because, God knows, Mr. Speaker, the way many of us here in this Legislature—and I think most Ontarians—work today, we don't have the time we used to have to go home and always prepare fresh meals for our kids and have an hour or so to cook a fresh meal. These folks are providing fresh food that we can bring home and feed to our families, food that's healthy, fresh, natural and accommodates our families. I look at that as another Ontario success story.

I sometimes think we take for granted the fact that we in this province have some of the safest, healthiest, best-quality food anywhere in the world.

I had the opportunity, again when I was Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, just this last January to travel with the Premier—Premier McGuinty at the time—to China on a trade mission that focused very much on the agri-food industry. I've got to tell you that when you look at places around the world like China, they do not take fresh, safe food for granted. In fact, there's a huge demand there for food that Ontario can produce that can give their population the comfort of knowing that they're feeding their family food that's going to be very, very healthy.

I want to share with the members and those listening today across the province some examples of some of the companies in the agri-food industry that are doing really, really well. They're selling product here for the most part, but they've got incredible potential to sell around the world. I'm reminded of a company called Canadian Dairy Manufacturing. They really impressed me because everywhere we went in China, they were signing contracts. In fact, a good proportion of the overall—I think it was close to \$700 million, if I remember, of contracts signed, and at least half of them were from this company, because what they're doing is they're producing high-end infant formula using Canadian milk ingredients that is seen worldwide as the safest baby formula in the world. We don't want to dwell on the negative, but China had some huge challenges with that a number of years ago. This creates a huge opportunity for this company that's now marketing abroad, taking perhaps the best-quality infant formula in the world and taking it to other parts of the world that really need it.

I was really surprised as well to meet with the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association, who accompanied us over there. I had no idea how big Ontario was when it comes to the world market for ginseng. In fact, we produce the highest-quality ginseng in the world, and 90% of our product is exported to Hong Kong and Taiwan. We're talking about 2.3 kilograms that we produce annually. This is a huge market. What's interesting about this market, too, is that it's an example of the innovation that exists among Ontario's farmers and farming community and agricultural community, because many of those that are producing ginseng now were former tobacco farmers who have seen the market, seen where that is going, and

have transferred over to this ginseng market that's grown so much and is such a huge global success story for Ontario, one that I think most Ontarians would not know because the market for ginseng here in Ontario is good, but the market to export is even better.

I want to just mention another company that accompanied us. There were a number of wine companies that accompanied us. We have such a successful wine industry here in this province, something we can be very, very proud of. Pillitteri Estates Winery also accompanied us, and I had the honour of opening with them their Canadian Lifestyle Centre, where they're highlighting their world-class icewine. In fact, the former Minister of Agriculture is nodding his head, because he's very familiar with this industry—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The number one icewine.

Hon. Brad Duguid: They're number one in the world when it comes to icewines, and there are so many different-quality icewines that they produce. That's another great agri-food success story for Ontario that we should be very, very proud of. It doesn't matter where in the province you live—whether you live in my community of Scarborough or you live in Timiskaming—Cochrane. It doesn't matter what you do. These are important success stories that impact the lives of every single one of us.

I also want to share, in the short time I have left, a couple of stories about innovation in this sector—local food innovation. I mentioned that my wife likes to go out to Clarington, because she kind of grew up in that area. There's a company there called Algoma Orchards. When I read about them, I was totally impressed. These are the Gibson and Kemp families, that began growing apples there in—I think it was 1964; I think I was two years old when they began this business. They're pretty much a largely independent business.

They set up a state-of-the-art, automated fresh-juice-and-apple-cider facility in 2010 which offers numerous bottling options, sold under both Algoma Orchards' label and a variety of other private labels. They're offering 22 distinct-quality grades of apples that go into this operation. Their imaging equipment categorizes 54 images per apple per second. I know that kind of sounds boring, probably, to those people listening, and a little too technical, but it's actually world-class innovation happening right in Durham, right in Clarington, in our agri-food industry, by a company that was started by a couple of families of apple growers that are now doing all kinds of juice. Again, they're seen as among the best in the world. They can now store up to 1.2 million apples in controlled environments, something that I would say probably 15 or 20 years ago would have been impossible to do, and they've won a number of awards for their innovation.

In the six minutes or so I have left, I want to talk a little bit as well about how local food can take place even in urban areas. I think of my local hospital, Scarborough Hospital, who were honoured in 2012 with the Local Food Champion Award of Kostuch Media Ltd. They

were awarded that for changing over their menu to ensure that a good percentage of their menu that they provided—we all hear about hospital food and how bad it is, and one of the reasons is, it has always probably been pretty prepackaged stuff, but not anymore. Hospitals are starting to get it. They're starting to really recognize the need to provide good customer-patient service. They're also recognizing how fresh, healthy local food can impact health outcomes. When you go into a hospital, you would think that they would have known that 20 years ago, but they're getting it now. In Scarborough Hospital, they've changed over their menu. A good proportion of the food that they're using—and they're maximizing this to the best possible—is locally grown fresh produce and food—

Ms. Cindy Forster: From Ontario, I hope.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Locally grown, from a community close by, which is really important—which is the way to go. That's one hospital—and I think the member opposite is nodding her head, so her local hospital, I expect, might be into that as well, and there are probably many others.

That's really what this act, in my view, is all about: It's about awareness. It's not so much forcing people to do things; it's opening people's eyes up to the opportunities, the benefits and sometimes the cost-effectiveness, too, of thinking local, of taking advantage of those local opportunities—and, in the case of the health care system, getting better opportunities.

In the case of our education system—the Minister of Education is here—we need our young people to be healthy in the classroom, and I can guarantee you: If they're eating fresh, locally grown food, they're going to be healthier. Their minds are going to be healthier, they're going to learn better, we're going to get better results, and at the same time we're driving our local agriculture economy here. We're creating jobs in our own province for our own people in our own communities. We're reducing the need to transport food from one end of the province to the other, or from one end of North America to the other, or from one end of the world to the other side of the world.

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We don't mind doing that with our products when the need is there, because we have some of the best products in the world. So I'm not saying we don't want to export food or that food trade is a bad thing; it's not at all. But when we have the choice of having our locally grown food here in Ontario, we need to recognize the fact that there's no better food anywhere else on the planet.

As I said earlier, I was able to have the privilege of serving as the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Having the opportunity to travel into other markets—I've got to tell you, our reputation globally for having healthy, fresh, safe food is second to none. And this is a reputation that we ought to—and I know that the minister of economic development and jobs is seriously looking at that as he looks at our trade policies—we need to continue to make agri-food one of our top priorities.

I think we're second or third now in North America in terms of our agri-food cluster here in this province.

That's phenomenal. Seven hundred thousand Ontarians are working in this sector today. That's a lot of families, a lot of workers, that are benefiting from our agri-food sector. I think it's a \$34-billion contribution to our economy as a whole, to our gross domestic product.

This is not a small industry. This is big industry. This rivals our auto sector, in many ways, to the significance that it has on the economy. In fact, when I used to talk to the former Minister of Agriculture, he would tell me that he thinks it's even greater, but I don't know about that. I don't want to get into a debate about agriculture versus auto; they're both important. They're both really important. But agriculture is a huge industry, hugely important to our economy.

I want to close by saying that I have a certain attachment to this that most members in this Legislature would probably be surprised about. Even the member for Oxford would be surprised at this. He knows I drive a pickup truck, so I do have those rural roots somewhere deep within me. My family was very much involved in apple growing in the Collingwood area, Thornbury area. One of my memories as a young person is, whenever they came into town—and they always hated to do that because they were afraid to drive on the 401. They really didn't want to get into the hustle and bustle of the city at all. But when they would come to visit, they would always bring that bushel or two of fresh apples. I've got to tell you: When you eat that fresh food, there is absolutely nothing as good tasting as a fresh apple. When you go to the grocery store, it has been there for a while; it has probably travelled from somewhere. If you can get fresh-grown apples from Ontario, there is nothing better anywhere in the world than that.

So let me close by saying to the members opposite: While I recognize the need for you to do your jobs as critics, I think, by and large, this is a bill that we can all support, that we can all work together on. It may not go as far as you want it to go, it may not do everything that it could do, but I think it's a good thing for our agri-food sector in Ontario. I look forward to further debate on this.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to give a few comments on the government's Bill 36, the Local Food Act. It's interesting. We just heard from our member, the minister of colleges, universities and trades. I thought it was interesting: He talked about awareness.

Awareness actually has to start in the home. It can be perpetuated through proper implementation in the classroom. I say that because, prior to October 6, 2011, I was vice-president of Ontario Agri-Food Education, which is the child, if you will, of a provincial program called Agriculture in the Classroom. This is really where it needs to go.

Bill 36 is a good start, but for goodness' sake, it doesn't go far enough. We need to be able to have food literacy in our classroom. That's where I'd like to applaud our agriculture and rural affairs critic, Ernie Hardeman, because he has been very astute. He incorpor-

ated into our discussion paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, the need for food literacy. The fact of the matter is, people need to understand where their food is coming from, because it's quite sad, you know: People may think they're eating an apple in January and they're doing a good thing for Ontario's agriculture and food industry. The fact of the matter is, depending on where the apple came from and the timing of the season, it could very well have been imported into this province. So we need to appreciate how to eat locally in season, and go so much further and appreciate our farmers. That's why Agriculture Week in no way can be replaced by Local Food Week. By introducing a second week, you're going to be causing commodity organizations to possibly pick and choose.

I was general manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Cooperative—a small marketing budget—and we're always going to be celebrating the farmer. Now you're going to be forcing us to rethink how we spend our money. So we have to think about this a little bit further.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to focus my comments today on a comment that the member across the way—I apologize; I forgot the individual's area—but just a positive signal, and it is a positive signal. I want to talk a little bit about a particular program which some individuals have hit on and the importance of actually having these programs, talking about foods in our schools and how we can impact a young adult's life and essentially build self-values within themselves.

There's a particular program at the high school in Desbarats, CASS, and a lot of their students from the surrounding areas, from Blind River, along with Desbarats, Bruce Mines and those areas—they all participate at this school. There's this one program called Planting Seeds of Hope. It's a program that is geared and run by Patricia Wynter and Dan Boileau. Kids participate in actually planting their foods and caring for them, and what it does is, it really gives them a sense of ownership. They really care for this area; kids are developing more skills as far as interacting with themselves. They go out of their way, where they're creating life. They're not only just creating life, they're caring for it.

So there are positive things that can actually come out of this bill. We will be supporting this bill.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Mantha: However, you have to also listen and not just clap your hands, because there have been very good suggestions that have been made by some of our colleagues on this side. We would expect you to hear those voices and we would expect you to listen to those ideas.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to respond to the very good comments of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Farmers feed cities, but they also need cities, and the consumers in cities and elsewhere

who consume their food. We in Ontario are blessed because we produce the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world, without a doubt. We're the envy of the world.

I agree with some of the members who spoke about the importance of education and doing that. If you're going to celebrate what's good, you want to do that in ways that don't turn people off, that don't force a whole set of new regulations on people so that they have a response that maybe is less than positive. You want to work with them together, and this bill certainly does that.

Food sovereignty is an important issue, having control about one's own food needs and not being dependent on other countries. Because when things get tough—global warming and everything else—those markets that we've come to unfortunately rely on may not be there. So we need to be growing our own food.

The best-known brand in Ontario, from a marketing perspective, is Foodland Ontario. You know, "Good things grow in Ontario"—number 2. You know what number 1 is? McDonald's. Do we have a lot of work to do yet—so we need to get at it.

You know, 68% of all the product that's produced is sold to processors. We're number 1 in the country. There are over 3,000 processing firms and 77% of all the processors in Canada are right here in Ontario. It's a great industry, and we should support it. This act helps us to do that.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly listened to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm sure he drives his truck around Scarborough. But the whole point here is that Bill 36, about local food, is important. I think what it's trying to do is change the channel, unfortunately, from the great work done by a former colleague here—from Perth, I think—Bert Johnson. So I pay respect to the work done on the whole idea of Agriculture Week, I think it was referred to.

I also have respect for the member who just spoke, the Minister of Community and Social Services and former Minister of Agriculture. But importantly, I'm waiting in anticipation for the member from Oxford, who served as Minister of Agriculture in the government, and I know members in our caucus who are very much related to the community of agriculture.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He had them all—the member from Kingston is speaking up. That's an indication of how disconnected the Liberal caucus really is. They announced that the minister would be the Minister of Agriculture and then a separate one for rural affairs, and left out food. So they really didn't get the whole mandate of OMAFRA, which is the whole issue that should be debated. They're changing the channel with a substantially tokenistic venture into local food—the 100-mile diet and all those things that have been talked about for some time.

But our current critic Mr. Hardeman will bring some content to the debate and, I think, a commitment to agriculture that needs to be completely reassured, not having someone who's living in a penthouse somewhere here in Toronto trying to run rural Ontario. This certainly sends the wrong message around the commodity tables I go to during the times that agriculture has to talk about issues. But we're all here for the right reasons. We respect the farmers who grow the food that we eat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has two minutes.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the members from Huron–Bruce and Algoma–Manitoulin, the Minister of Community and Social Services and, finally, the member from Durham for their comments. I think, by and large, what was interesting is that just about every speaker, except the last, talked about the future and making sure we focus on education. I think that's interesting. I think it's important, as well, that each and every one of us does that.

The member from Huron–Bruce has some expertise in this area. She said she was vice-president of agri-food education. She talked about "food literacy," which is an interesting term, and I agree. As somebody who grew up in a time when, really, food wasn't talked about in school, I've learned a lot in this position, working with some of my colleagues on this side and on the other side of the House who live in communities that, by and large, rely on agriculture.

The member from Algoma–Manitoulin talked about a program called Planting Seeds of Hope, again, focusing on young people, focusing on kids and the importance of growing food and the ability to be self-sufficient—something that I think is really, really interesting.

The Minister of Community and Social Services—I've got to tell you, I listened very carefully to what he said. I listened even more carefully to what he sang. I'm not so sure your future is in singing, Minister, but I've been watching, with my wife, the show *The Voice* of late. Maybe with a little bit of training, you could go on that show, because it seems to be getting more and more popular.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite is doing one of these, so she's going to trade for you.

I just want to end. The member from Durham was his typically negative self. He's a friend of mine—he's a hockey player—but he doesn't have the rosiest disposition around this place. At the same time, one would hope that he, too, votes for this legislation, because it's good for Ontario; it's good for our agri-food industry.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I think introducing a food act is an opportunity. A food act is an opportunity to address the real challenges we are facing in our food system, to look at the system from field to fork and see what is working and where the system can be improved.

It's an opportunity to address the challenges our farmers are facing, such as red tape, spiralling hydro costs and the fact that government has become increasingly urban-focused; to look at the fact that our small abattoirs are closing; to examine the skills shortages in agriculture and food processing—challenges that are preventing our agribusinesses and our food processors from expanding.

Unfortunately, as Sustain Ontario said last time this bill was introduced, the Local Food Act introduced by this government missed many opportunities. The first Local Food Act that this government introduced had a great name, but it was all fluff. After four months of the Legislature being prorogued and organizations and members of the opposition pointing out that the bill didn't accomplish anything, the government has introduced essentially the same bill.

There is still nothing of substance. There is nothing in the bill that would make a significant impact on growing, availability or consumption of local food. I think it's very unfortunate the government didn't listen to groups like Sustain Ontario, which took the time to really look at our agriculture industry and our food system and put forward proposals that would have had a positive impact. They were asked to lead a consultation, which they did. In April 2012, they released a draft Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy. It contained 81 specific actions or strategies that they felt the government should consider, and they provided examples of policies and policy-related activities that would support each one of these 81 actions. All of that work, all of that consultation and there was only one of those initiatives reflected in this bill: just government procurement.

In July, Sustain Ontario released drafting notes they prepared for the government which addressed food, education, land use planning, farm stewardship and ecological practices and reducing waste in our food system. They provided a summary of what they'd hoped they would see in the food act, which was endorsed by almost 80 different local food groups, companies and farmers. It stated that the following three key points needed to be addressed in the food act:

- ensure that all Ontarians have access to the means to obtain safe, healthy, local, culinarily acceptable food;
- provide Ontarians with the information, knowledge, skills and resources and relationships to support healthy eating and healthy choices where they live, work, learn and play;
- protect and promote a diverse and sustainable food production system that contributes to an equitable and sustainable economy.

Again, the only thing this bill attempts to address is the government procurement portion. There is nothing to recognize the many parts of our food system, nothing to meet the request for more food education and providing people with skills and knowledge to support healthy eating habits; nothing to increase access for Ontarians to local food or address the economic impact of our food system.

I want to commend Sustain Ontario for looking at the food system as a whole and for putting forward a

proposal to strengthen the entire system, starting on our farms.

In her remarks on this bill last week, the Minister of Agriculture talked about food from farm gate to dinner plate. We know that food doesn't start at the farm gate. It starts with the hard work of farmers in the barns and in the fields. If we don't address the challenges the farmers are facing, as well as those with distribution, processing and access to local food, we cannot really have a meaningful impact.

It is unfortunate the government didn't listen to agriculture groups such as the Christian Farmers or the National Farmers Union, who, in their proposal, addressed the need to bring more young people into agriculture, protecting our environment and ensuring our farms are financially viable.

In their commentary last fall, the OFA laid out what they felt should be included in the food act, such as adoption of market structures to enhance farmer empowerment in the marketplace through value-added initiatives; farmers' markets and co-operatives; reintroduction of food and agriculture in the school curriculum; and a modern and efficient system for storage, transportation and distribution of food.

But it's not just agriculture organizations that were asking for a more substantial food act. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable wrote to the Premier before the introduction and asked that she "broaden the act's scope in order to make it a meaningful and comprehensive policy that is able to address a wide range of food issues in Ontario."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association took the time to draft a model food act, and I want to commend them for all the work they put into creating that and thank them for sharing it with us.

Following the introduction, they issued a news release which said, "CELA welcomes the introduction of the government's local food bill yesterday but notes that some additional amendments would improve the bill, as outlined in the CELA's model food bill." The release went on to say, "Joseph Castrilli, counsel at CELA, notes that 'the bill, although slightly improved from its previous iteration, would significantly benefit from stronger legislative language, greater accountability, and a broader scope.'"

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Mr. Speaker, I understand their disappointment. The model local food act drafted by the Canadian Environmental Law Association was 28 pages long, fully researched and properly drafted, and you will be aware that we managed to get about a page and a half in the one the government has introduced. It contained proposals to enhance government coordination by establishing an interministerial committee requiring the minister to look at barriers to production, distribution and consumer markets, as well as barriers that limit access by consumers to local food stocks. Their model food act included proposals to increase food education and food literacy. The section on local food procurement required public

sector organizations and ministries to increase their procurement of local sustainable or local organic food annually until such procurements constituted a percentage of the overall food budget specified through relevant targets—set targets and try to achieve them.

We appreciated all these ideas that these organizations put forward, and I'm disappointed that they don't see their work reflected in this bill and that the government has missed an opportunity to implement those initiatives—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has a point of order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd ask the Clerks to do a quorum call.

Interjection: Speaker, we do not have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would call for a quorum—a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We can continue the debate. The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We appreciated all the ideas that these organizations put forward, and I'm disappointed that we don't see that work reflected in this bill and that the government has missed the opportunity to implement those initiatives which would have strengthened our food system.

On March 28, with the reintroduction of the Local Food Act, a number of organizations wrote joint letters to the Premier to share their thoughts about what was missing in this bill. The letter came from—and I list them here—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, Food Share, Sustain Ontario, sustainable food production, Food Forward, Toronto Food Policy Council, Holland Marsh Growers' Association, Organic Council of Ontario, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and Ontario Farm Fresh. In the letter, they said, "Premier, we also feel the Local Food Act can and should do more than promote awareness and strive to improve procurement."

The letter went on to explain a number of issues that these 11 organizations agreed needed to be addressed in the food act, and I want to share a few of those quotes from that letter.

The first quote is, "We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the basic food literacy of all Ontarians."

The second one: "Likewise, a Local Food Act should also address the very fundamental issue of food access—the ability of all Ontarians to procure nutritious and culturally acceptable food at all times."

The third one: "Premier, we hope that you will also extend the focus of Bill 36 to encompass regional economic development opportunities."

And finally: "We feel that it is important to emphasize that Bill 36 can realize several environmental goals."

I'm also disappointed that we don't see many of these ideas that we put forward in our agriculture, food and rural affairs white paper, *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for Rural Ontario*. We proposed a comprehensive Ontario food act that would not only have the government show leadership in local food procurement, but would help our farmers, food processors and agribusinesses by reducing red tape and supporting our Ontario food system.

As we state in our white paper, to have an impact, the legislation needs to address our entire food system from field to fork, not farm gate to dinner plate, and contain real, meaningful changes. Our Ontario food act would also include our proposals for a dedicated fund for our business risk management program and the one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses.

We laid out our real changes that would have strengthened our agriculture industry, increased access to local food and helped our food processors, but the government has chosen not to incorporate any of our proposals. In fact, this is essentially the same bill that was introduced last fall. At that time, local food group Food Forward said, "The Local Food Act must be strengthened to create further goals, targets, research, and support for hospitals, universities, and all other public institutions, to increase the amount of fresh, local, and ecologically produced food, as suggested by Sustain Ontario."

In their blog, the Christian Farmers said, "The proposed Local Food Act is one that can be considered from more angles than it is currently envisioned." They went on to say that "the local food movement is about more than government procurement targets. For example, farmers focused on supplying farmers' markets, community-shared agriculture and agri-tourism are all important parts of local food production. With some consideration, we may find that the Local Food Act may be able to provide additional tools for these producers to succeed in the long term."

In fact, even the Premier acknowledged—and I think this is very interesting—that the Local Food Act introduced last fall was weak when in her leadership campaign she committed to introducing a strengthened Local Food Act. But the new bill that was introduced a few weeks ago still has no substance, and most of what is contained in the bill the government already had power to do.

The bill states that the minister shall consult before establishing a goal or target. There is absolutely nothing that would prevent the minister from consulting right now without the bill. In fact, we wish she would do a little more of that. We wish she had consulted with the farming community before allowing the new Ontario Tire Stewardship fees for agricultural tires, which will result in massive increases. The bill states, "The minister may, to further the purposes of this act"—and I want to emphasize the word "may"—"establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." That's something that she, again, can do right now; she doesn't need a bill to do that. This is an area that I'm going to address later in more detail, but I want to make it clear that this is

something that the Minister of Agriculture and Food could have done two months ago. Since there is no requirement in legislation to actually achieve the goals, there is absolutely no need to put it into legislation.

The bill requires a report on local food, but there is nothing to prevent the government from producing that right now. In fact, it seems logical to me that before creating a Local Food Act, you would look at the status of local food in Ontario—what has already been done and whether it is actually working. If the government had done a proper job in creating a local food act, they should be able to provide us with that report today. The fact that they haven't demonstrates that this bill is much more about public relations than it is about making Ontario's food system work. In fact, the only thing in the whole bill that requires legislation is in the creation of a Local Food Week, which unfortunately the government has timed to replace the existing Ontario Agriculture Week.

In 1998, Bert Johnson, the MPP from Perth, introduced a private member's bill which established the week before Thanksgiving as Ontario Agriculture Week. For the past 15 years, that has been the week when we recognize the contributions of Ontario's farmers, from the statements in this Legislature to the blue tractors that have been on the front lawn to the events in rural communities across Ontario. As a former Liberal agriculture minister, Steve Peters, said, "It is important that we all take time to reflect on where our food and agricultural products come from and recognize the hard work of our farmers."

We recognize the importance of celebrating local food, but it should not be at the expense of recognizing the many contributions of our farmers, not just for the food they produce, but how hard they work and their contribution to our economy and their work as stewards of the land.

1630

Despite this, the Local Food Act, if passed as the Minister of Agriculture introduced it, would replace Ontario Agriculture Week. Yesterday, the parliamentary assistant of agriculture and food asked, "What's wrong with that?" I want to ensure that all the members of the Legislature understand why this week matters.

Ontario Agriculture Week is about recognizing farmers who stay up all night caring for a sick animal. It's about recognizing the farmers who worked together to ensure that after last summer's drought, farmers got the hay they needed to feed their animals. It's about recognizing that farmers work from sunrise to sunset and then far into the night to get their work done before it rains. It's about recognizing farmers who don't have weekends or holidays, because even on Christmas the cows need to be milked, the pigs need to be fed and the eggs need to be collected. It's about recognizing that after all that, the farmer still makes time to help the community as a neighbour in need.

Ontario Agriculture Week is about recognizing that even when times get tough, when they are losing money on every hog, when frost kills the blossoms on the fruit

trees and when weather destroys the crops they worked so hard to produce, our farmers keep going because we depend on them. We rely on them not just to put fresh food on our tables but as the backbone of our rural communities and a major part of our provincial economy.

In 2010, an OFA news release entitled "Ontario Celebrates More than Food During Agriculture Week" stated, "This week encourages Ontarians to reflect on the impact of agriculture for the province—not just as a source for food, but also as an important industry that provides reliable economic stimulus for Ontario."

The Ontario Agriculture Week bill actually starts off with a quote: "Ontario's agriculture industry has always been and continues to be an important part of the province's economy."

The legislation goes on to say, "The food and other agricultural products that sustain our lives are the result of the skill, hard work and dedication of Ontario's farming communities and farm families. It is important to recognize and acknowledge this ongoing contribution by Ontario farmers to the quality of life of all our citizens."

The Ontario PC caucus believes in Ontario Agriculture Week and we believe that we should continue to celebrate our farmers the week before Thanksgiving, as we have for the last 15 years. I don't know whether the part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food didn't know that it was Ontario Agriculture Week or simply didn't understand the importance of recognizing the farmers. Either way, I have to say that I'm very disappointed. This government continues to forget about the importance of rural Ontario and agriculture until it's time for a photo opportunity.

I know that the minister has been hearing from people concerned about her proposal to replace Agriculture Week. One person said in an email—I got these emails, and they were copies of the ones that were sent to the Premier—"Our very existence relies on these hard-working farming individuals. Please do not devalue their service by removing the essence of the week."

Another one said, "Agriculture is much more than 'local food' and requires broader recognition. Ontario producers export significant amounts of the product it produces, providing huge economic benefit back to the Ontario economy through processing, transportation and other services—far beyond what local foods provide in return.

"By replacing Agriculture Week with Local Food Week, it weakens the connection consumers have with food and the daily efforts ... Ontario producers provide" to our economy.

I'm pleased to announce that the PC caucus will be putting forward an amendment to save Ontario Agriculture Week, and I hope that all members of this Legislature will support that amendment. We will move Local Food Week so we have a separate week to celebrate the food that our farmers grow, as well as all the other people involved in our local food system—people involved in our farmers' markets, our local food organization and our Ontario Food Terminal.

It is a time to recognize the restaurants that make the effort to source from Ontario's farms, such as Cowbell here in Toronto, SixThirtyNine in Woodstock, Cedars and Co. in Ottawa, and Loblaws with Ontario corn-fed beef.

In addition to that amendment, I expect many agriculture and local food organizations will also have proposals for amendments. Already we've heard from a number of people who have expressed concerns about the areas that have been missed, such as food literacy and the challenges with food distribution, which I will be addressing later. I look forward to hearing from more of these groups and working with them to put forward amendments to try and make this a real Ontario food act, as we have proposed.

As I said earlier, this food act has missed some wonderful opportunities. Last year, as the first step in preparing our white paper on agriculture, food and rural affairs, we launched an extensive survey of farmers, agribusinesses and food processors. We recognize that all of these sectors are interrelated, and to have a strong food system, we need to look at the system as a whole and the challenges impacting each part. It's not enough to introduce legislation with a nice title, set some goals and hope that the public sector will "aspire" to meet them.

We reached out to the farmers. We talked to the agricultural organizations and the local food groups. We met with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors. We consulted with food processors. We held round tables with agribusinesses. We asked them the biggest challenges their organization was facing: What was that biggest challenge? We asked them what the government's priority should be. We asked food processors how much local food they were using; if they were sourcing items from other jurisdictions, and why; and what would make them use more local food. We asked about trade issues and staffing. We asked about what could strengthen their industry.

They told us there were some real challenges that their industries are facing, and some of them are caused, Mr. Speaker—and I'm sure that you would understand that—by the government. Every single one of the sectors told us that government red tape and paperwork is a significant challenge. All of them said they were impacted by increasing hydro costs. We heard from agribusinesses that they are worried about the impact of the declining horse racing industry.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about one of these challenges, because I think that this bill was a great opportunity for the government to address them. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the problems they have created and show that they have changed, but again, that opportunity was missed. As I said, the biggest challenge our farmers are facing is red tape and government paperwork. In our agricultural survey last summer, over 77% of farmers said that red tape was increasing. That's consistent with the findings of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the CFIB.

When we asked the biggest challenges farmers were facing, one responded, "The mountain of paperwork and

overwhelming lack of clarity in regulation means I spend too much time doing paperwork and not enough time scouting my fields and doing research and innovation to move my farm forward."

Another said, "Regulations, and enforcement of those regulations by people who do not understand agriculture."

Another said, "Red tape, plain and simple. Detracts focus from the job at hand, and I am always worried someone from one of the ministries will show up unexpectedly, use all of my time for that day (and probably many others, responding and complying with their whimsical findings) and cost me yet more money."

In their submission on the Local Food Act, the National Farmers Union said, "The regulatory burden pushes small and medium-scale food operations, including small abattoirs, out of business."

When we asked processors about what products they had challenges sourcing from Ontario, one said, "Locally grown foods and products. Your regulations, for instance, killed the Ontario cheese industry."

Recently, Darcy Higgins of Food Forward wrote, "A review of regulations that hamper small food enterprise could also lead to the creation of new jobs in Ontario. In rural, suburban, and urban parts of the province, entrepreneurs are finding unclear and outdated, intelligence-challenging regulations that don't affect health, safety, or the environment but hamper their ability to undertake a business venture." When I met with Darcy, he told me about the red tape challenges that food entrepreneurs here in Toronto are facing.

Despite all of this, there is absolutely nothing in this act that addresses the regulatory burden that our farmers, agribusinesses and food processors are facing.

In her leadoff, the Minister of Agriculture and Food talked about consultations that her government had done. After this bill was introduced the first time, CBC Radio interviewed an Ottawa farmer, Robin Turner, who attended one of the round tables, and he said, "Another big part of it I think that the Local Food Act doesn't really address is increasing access to all the services and transforming food. For example, in Dan's case, getting abattoirs that are closer and potentially more smaller abattoirs."

He went on to say, "One of the hard things in Ontario—and I brought this up in our meeting with the minister; he didn't really say much about it—is that this province had a thriving meat processing and dairy cheese industry 30 or 40 years ago. When I was a kid, when I grew up, there were five cheese factories within half an hour of where I lived. And they are all gone because of regulation."

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In our recent white paper, the PC caucus put forward a number of initiatives to address this regulatory burden. We would review licences, permits and certificates to see which ones could be combined and which ones could be eliminated.

In our survey, agribusinesses found they had to have up to 20 licences and permits to operate, each with its

own application form and—you can be sure, Mr. Speaker—each with its own fee. The government claims to have cut red tape, but farmers and agribusinesses and food processors tell us it's increasing. In fact, 85.7% of the agribusinesses said it was increasing.

We would reduce the regulatory burden by at least 33% over three years, and if we miss our target, cabinet—including the Premier—would have their pay docked. There's no better way to get people to comply, Mr. Speaker.

In our survey, we asked farmers what ministries they deal with, and of course they said OMAFRA. But they also reported dealing with the Ministries of the Environment, Natural Resources, Finance, Labour, Health, Energy, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Northern Development, Aboriginal Affairs and the Ministry of Culture.

More disturbing were the reports from farmers having to apply to different ministries on the same issue and getting different answers. It shouldn't be up to farmers to sort out a dispute between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of the Environment.

Almost two years ago, we proposed a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses. Four months later, the government copied that commitment, but they have done nothing to actually achieve it. We would implement it.

Internal documents from OMAFRA show that in their staff consultation they weren't even looking at the one-window approach. At a staff town hall meeting last October, the ministry asked, "What is the strongest opportunity you see to provide clients with a 'no wrong window' approach to accessing the full range of government services, expertise and products?" One of the answers they received from staff was that they should implement a one-window approach.

I might point out that later in that consultation, the ministry asked how they could increase employee satisfaction and engagement, and the response was that they should listen to the staff—and in this case, we agree.

Implementing the one-window approach, reducing regulations and reviewing licences are three steps to reduce red tape and regulation which could have been implemented in this Local Food Act—another missed opportunity.

In our survey of food processors, one of the groups that said they were particularly challenged by red tape was local abattoirs. We also heard from the Ontario Independent Meat Processors that the number one reason they were contacted by their members in 2011 was for help dealing with government regulations.

Our first priority, as it always has been, is food safety, but we need to look at redundant regulations, which have no value and are forcing abattoirs out of business. Ontario has already lost many of its small abattoirs. There are whole regions that no longer have local abattoirs. Cutting red tape is only a small part of the solution, but it would be a good first step.

When we asked processors about the biggest challenge their company was facing, one said it was how to get the

government to recognize the huge benefit of small meat processors in the province. Many people have pointed out that it is impossible to have local meat without our local abattoirs, but this act does nothing to address that problem.

It also does nothing to address the problem of food distribution. Many groups across Ontario have recognized the need to bring local food together in order to market it and improve food distribution. Sustain Ontario recently hosted a seminar on this topic and said, "Food hubs can be an integral part in fulfilling the missing link of a local food system and alleviate barriers that often highlight the limited resources in the who, what, where and how of local food sourcing."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, in their model food act, included a proposal for regional food hubs.

In their recent green paper series, the Greenbelt Foundation fund stated, "Lack of access to products from Ontario farms is a fundamental barrier to increase the amount of Ontario food in public institutions." They identified that one of the obstacles to government procurement of local food was that supply needed to be aggregated.

This mirrors what we heard from Michigan about their experience with Buy Michigan First through their correctional facilities. They told us that one of the challenges they faced in sourcing local foods was that they didn't have the staff resources to contact all the different suppliers and visit multiple locations. It needed to be brought together.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently announced that New York would be building new food hubs to help bring local goods to market, spur growth and strengthen communities.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have the Ontario Food Terminal here in Toronto, which does an excellent job of bringing together wholesalers to sell to our restaurants, processors and stores. However, as we look to expand and strengthen our food system, it's clear that more needs to be done to bring together local food, increase market access for farmers, and make it easier for local retailers and restaurants to access fresh Ontario food.

That's why, in our white paper, we are proposing a regional food terminal, likely located in southwestern Ontario, in the London area, or in eastern Ontario, near Ottawa. In both of these areas, local food is being loaded onto trucks and shipped to the food terminal in Toronto, only to be resold, loaded on new trucks and shipped back. As Ottawa local food group Just Food said, "Not only does a local food terminal reduce the transport distances of food (currently, a percentage of the produce from the Ontario region travels to Toronto, to then be bought by an Ottawa-based food supplier and transported back), but it also creates significant employment and volunteer opportunities for the local economy and more effective coordination of the distribution of locally produced food."

Mr. Speaker, creating a new food terminal would create opportunities for food wholesalers that can't get

space at the Ontario Food Terminal. It would reduce our carbon footprint, encourage local food and create jobs. It is a bold idea, but it is something that should be in the food act. The fact that the government chose not to include it is just another example of a missed opportunity.

One of the other issues we heard about in our surveys was the spiralling cost of hydro. Ninety-seven per cent of farmers said they had been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and over 60% said that impact had been significant. When asked about the biggest challenges his farm is facing, one farmer in southwestern Ontario said, "Hydro metering, solar and wind are ludicrous until you can tell me how to recoup these extra costs."

A farmer from eastern Ontario said, "Trying to bring the costs of energy down. Fuel has been through the roof lately. Electricity has darn near doubled."

The government's microFIT Program has benefitted a few at the expense of the rest of Ontarians, including the majority of our farmers.

Earlier this week, we heard that Ontarians are going to have to pay \$275 million—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I know that you give great latitude to what a member can speak about when we speak about a particular bill, but this is about the Local Food Act for the province of Ontario. I wonder if you could remind the member to restrict in sort of a general way his comments to the great quality of the local food that's being produced in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would obviously stand up if I felt the member was veering too far. I think actually 99% of it has been involved with food and agriculture. So I can't agree with the member on this one. Go ahead.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just point out to the objector that the problem is that all of this should have been in the food act and it's not. That's the point I'm trying to make.

Earlier this week, we heard that Ontarians are going to have to pay \$275 million—\$85 million more than the government claimed—for the relocation of the Mississauga plant. Again, that will be added on to our hydro bills. For many commodities grown in Ontario, the price is set on the Chicago exchange. If the cost of production increases, our farmers don't have an ability to pass it on. It comes straight out of their pocket, just like the recent Ontario Tire Stewardship fee increase approved by this government. Without consulting with farmers, this government approved eco fees that would increase the cost of a set of tires for a 1900 John Deere to \$729, up from \$61. The new tire fees for a John Deere 9770 combine increased to \$1,644 from \$91. The OFA said, "It's a drastic price"—

Interjections.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General, things were so nice in here a few minutes

ago, and you seem to be really stepping it up a notch. Would you like to cut it back a bit, please? Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The OFA said, "It's a drastic price increase that will be detrimental to Ontario farm businesses and the rural communities they support. The increase is all the more devastating because it has come as such a surprise. There were no opportunities for the public, or Ontario's largest general farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), to comment on these increases. Ontario farmers were not informed about these changes." That's their quote.

I've heard from hundreds of farmers who are upset about these fees. They've sent emails, they've called and they've signed petitions. But even though the Premier and part-time Minister of Agriculture acknowledged the problem several weeks ago, on April 1, the massive increases went into effect.

Ontario's farmers need a full-time minister who will stand up for them. It shouldn't be the OFA, who weren't even consulted about the fees, negotiating with Ontario Tire Stewardship.

On Friday, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—not the Minister of Agriculture—announced some changes to the fees, but they still represent a massive increase to farmers. As my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga pointed out in his question on Monday, it's still a 1,000% increase, with another 1,000% increase coming down the road.

For tires on a John Deere combine, the new proposed fee will be \$823 compared to our neighbours, Manitoba, where the fee will be \$24, and Quebec, where those tires are exempt and there will be no additional fees.

For a John Deere 9300 tractor, the new proposed fees would be \$729, exactly the same as the increase the government first approved and that went into effect April 1.

Farmers have been speaking out against these increases. Our tire dealerships have been telling the government that it will cost Ontario sales. Our party launched a petition and has raised it repeatedly in this Legislature, but the person who has been missing in action is the Minister of Agriculture. That is why it has been the Ontario Federation of Agriculture negotiating with Ontario Tire Stewardship.

Why is the Minister of Agriculture standing back and letting farmers get hit with this massive increase? Why did her government approve it without looking at the economic impact? The Premier has repeatedly said that she has taken on the role of minister to raise the profile of agriculture and food. It's a typical response from this government: When there is a problem, they hold a photo op.

Premier, publicity isn't the problem. The people of Ontario want to eat Ontario food. The problem is that no one in your government has been willing to stand up for the people who produce our food, and that hasn't changed.

Farmers need someone who will consult with them before implementing policies that will impact them. No matter what ministry the policies fall under, they need

someone who will address the challenges that Ontario agriculture faces.

Enviro-nics found that, "Ontario consumers are increasingly interested in reading origin labels on the food they purchase, with a preference for buying locally grown. A vast majority also state that they would buy more locally sourced food if they could find it in the grocery store."

Premier, we don't need photo ops; we need to get more local food into our stores. That means looking at all parts of our food system, from farm fields to processing to distribution and retailing.

Two months ago, when this minister was sworn in—the first time—I expressed my concerns that the Minister of Agriculture had been demoted to a part-time job. Many farmers expressed the same concern. One eastern Ontario farmer said, "Wynne needs to realize that if agriculture is to survive in Ontario, it does indeed need a full-time agriculture minister and one that is definitely in tune with where agriculture is and how important it is to the province."

A professional agrologist wrote, "I know from my experience from working with William Stewart, Jack Riddle, Dave Ramsay, Elmer Buchanan and other agriculture ministers that this responsible position requires full-time representation and long hours of work seven days a week."

Here in Ontario we grow hundreds of commodities. Understanding the issues of our many farmers and food processors, as well as our different regions, is a challenging job. An essential part of the job is having the time to meet with all the different organizations and to go out to talk to the farmers, visit the farms and see first-hand the challenges they are facing.

A month ago, I asked the Minister of Agriculture to go to eastern Ontario and visit farms that had been impacted by the drought, to talk to farmers who were suffering and to fix the flaws with the AgriRecovery program, which ended almost two months before the problem did.

I wrote to the Premier and asked her to extend the deadline, and when I didn't receive a response, I raised it in the Legislature on March 5 to point out that the deadline was getting closer. But it wasn't until March 15, hours before the deadline expired, that the Premier finally announced an extension. That doesn't give farmers stability or ability to plan. Farmers need an agriculture minister who is addressing problems right away, not waiting until hours before the deadline or after the increases have gone into effect.

In our meeting weeks ago, I raised another issue with the Premier, the lack of a proper appeal process for farmers who disagree with AgriStability decisions. Under the current process, farmers can appeal Agricorp decisions to the Ontario AgriStability Review Committee. However, the decisions are non-binding. That means that even if the review committee finds in favour of the farmer, Agricorp can still choose to ignore it and stick with their original finding. The former minister justified it by saying it was a federal requirement; however, a

federal spokesman said in a recent newspaper article that even though the committee's decision is not binding, in most jurisdictions—not in Ontario but in most jurisdictions—the appeal decision was upheld.

In Ontario, this has not been the case. I've heard from multiple farmers who went through the time, effort and expense for an appeal that the committee found that Agricorp had not applied the rules fairly, but Agricorp chose to ignore the ruling. These are farmers who paid the premiums for the program. I raised this issue with the Premier weeks ago. She was already aware of the issue but, to date, we've had no action on the problem.

With direction to Agricorp, it could have been resolved in this Legislature, but it simply hasn't been addressed. It's just one more missed opportunity to do the right thing for Ontario farmers.

Another thing we had hoped to see for our farmers in this bill was a dedicated fund for the Risk Management Program. For many years, the Ontario PC caucus has supported having an insurance program based on cost of production to help farmers manage their risk. In fact, in the two years before the program was introduced, the PC caucus called for a business risk management program in the Legislature 25 times. Tim Hudak repeated our commitment to introduce the program at the Earlton and St. Thomas international plowing matches and in speeches at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Grain Farmers of Ontario.

We understand the need to manage the risk for both our farmers and our government, but the program as it's designed today puts too much risk on our farmers. Each year, both the government and the farmers put the premiums into the program, but if the premiums aren't used, the government can take their remaining premiums back. We don't believe this is fair. We believe that it's not the best way to manage risk. If premiums aren't used, they should stay in the dedicated fund and be available for future years when the payout required is greater than the cap. That will help even out the good years with the bad, it will help manage the risk and it will benefit our farmers. It's another initiative that we propose to put in this food act and that we were hoping we'd see in the bill.

One of the other proposals that we put forward in our white paper was to increase food literacy by putting more food education in the curriculum. It's an area where Ontario can and should do better.

On their blog, FoodShare Toronto recently stated, "Food literacy cultivates an understanding of food from the ground up and equips children and youth with the skills to make healthy choices.

"How children eat when they are young lays the foundation for lifelong healthy eating, but good food education is not common in many schools in Ontario.

"Few students are taught how to grow their own food, cook a healthy meal or compost, or educated on where their food comes from."

A recent study by Farmers Feed Cities found that only 41% of 18- to 34-year-olds claim to be aware of where their food is grown.

I heard from one agriculture advocate who went into a classroom to talk to the students about local food. When he asked kids about their knowledge of agriculture, the most experienced was a child who had once been to a petting zoo.

There are a number of benefits to increasing food literacy, such as giving children the tools they need for a healthy diet, increasing awareness of local food and teaching students about our food system so those with an interest are encouraged to consider a career in agriculture or food processing.

That's why we proposed to put food education in the curriculum and proposed a co-op program to give young people from cities who have an interest in food and agriculture the opportunity to experience farming and encourage them to consider jobs in that sector.

That's also why we, and many organizations, were hoping for a real commitment to food literacy in this bill.

We believe that the best way to encourage people to choose healthy food and local food is through education: teaching them about nutrition and where our food comes from and giving them the skills to make good choices—not only while they're students but throughout their lives.

1700

This government believes that the solution is to ban or restrict certain foods in schools. In fact—and I think this is important, Mr. Speaker—on January 15, 2010, when the Premier was Minister of Education, she released the School Food and Beverage Policy, which restricts what food could be sold in our schools. She banned 500-millilitre containers of chocolate milk from all schools and 500-millilitre containers of white milk from elementary schools. Clearly, we do need food literacy if the Minister of Agriculture doesn't know that milk is good for you.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked a lot today about what isn't in the bill: addressing our challenges with red tape and hydro, improving local food distribution by bringing it together, and increasing food literacy. We also want to talk about some of the problems in the bill, such as the section on government procurement.

As you know, the Local Food Act says, "The minister may, to further the purpose of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food."

I have two specific concerns with that. First, there's no requirement that the minister actually set targets. Not only does the act not set targets, it doesn't even set a time frame in which the minister would be required to set targets. In fact, the government has indicated they may not set real targets at all. In a radio interview following the introduction of this bill last fall, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs stated that he was hoping that as a result of this act the broader public sector would "ideally set targets for themselves" after they got through reading the act.

In her leadoff speech, the current minister said that there were some concerns that if we are "too prescriptive as a provincial government, we would put in place an undue burden on local communities, on municipalities

and on producers. We don't want to do that." I hope she will clarify that statement and explain whether she's in fact saying that, as minister, she will choose not to set actual targets.

My second concern is with the word "aspire." In our briefing with the ministry, they called the goals "voluntary." In other words, the broader public sector can choose to completely ignore the targets. There are already a number of hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools and municipalities that have taken steps to increase the amount of local food they have purchased and to make more local food available for sale in their facilities. I want to commend them for that. They're already doing it because it's the right thing to do for the health of the people in their facility, for the environment and for our farmers. But there's nothing in this bill that would require our broader public sector to follow their example. These organizations are funded by taxpayers' dollars. The people of Ontario have a right to expect that they will meet certain standards.

The PC caucus believes that the Ontario government should lead by example, by buying Ontario food. Ontario grows great, safe, nutritious food. Our farmers are hard-working and innovative. We believe that if government gets out of their way, they can compete with farmers around the world. Why wouldn't we take real steps to support Ontario's agriculture industry and ensure that our government is a real leader in local food?

In her speech, the Minister of Agriculture said that we could not set real targets for local food because of concerns from municipalities and producers. The reality is that many municipalities are far ahead of the Ontario government in local food. They have taken leadership roles in requiring that a percentage of the food purchased for their facilities be sourced locally. Toronto already requires a percentage of local food in their contracts with their food providers. There are municipalities, like Norfolk county, that have worked to increase the local food in their local hospital and long-term-care homes. In 2008, Markham council adopted a food policy that instructs their cafeteria services for the Markham Civic Centre to purchase a minimum of 10% of its food from certified Local Food Plus farmers and to increase that percentage by 5% every year thereafter. By 2009, the cafeteria service provider had already reached 25%. In November, as part of their official plan review, Sudbury held a workshop to look at their local food system, and one of the results that came forward was a proposal for specific targets.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities have shown they value local food and they want to take steps to support their farmers and work with their processors.

The minister also cited concerns from producers. Just a few weeks ago in a pre-budget submission, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "Our food strategy needs a set of an agreed-upon and measurable outcomes to guide the development of all agriculture and food-related policies. This will lead to focused and meaningful

policies aimed at achieving goals for a sustainable food system.”

The Canadian National Food Strategy Framework recommends, “Canadian governments and public institutions lead by example and increase the utilization of Canadian-grown and processed products by at least 2% per year.” It seems everybody is setting goals and targets except our minister.

Targets must be reasonable and they should be incremental, but they must be real, specific and measurable.

Interestingly, last fall, when the government introduced this bill, they said they could not set real targets. Then it was because of trade concerns. We believe that’s simply incorrect. I don’t believe there’s any jurisdiction with more restrictive rules to ensure free trade and non-discrimination than the European Union, and yet there are numerous examples of government policies supporting the purchase of local food, such as those in Italy and the United Kingdom

In the United States, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 allows schools to use geographic preference as a factor in procurement of food for school lunches. This is intended to allow schools to give preference to locally grown or raised products. In fact, governments around the world have created policies to bring local food into the schools, from Nova Scotia here in Canada to Brazil and Japan. In fact, the report *Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario*, released by Metcalf Foundation in June 2010 states, “Governments at all levels, particularly in Europe and the United States, are using sustainable food procurement policies to build healthier, more economically viable food and farming systems.”

The Ontario law firm of Sack Goldblatt Mitchell provided an opinion on the trade compliance of local food procurement policies to the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union, which states in part: “In our view, local food procurement policies are entirely consistent with both international and domestic procurement rules. For the most part, these regimes simply do not apply to most local food procurement. Even where domestic procurement rules do apply, buy-local food policies would, if properly crafted, be compliant with those obligations.” They went on to say, “Food procurement policies would ... be exempt under domestic trade regimes because they relate to legitimate objectives including environmental protection, public health promotion and food security.”

Their conclusion was, “For the above-noted reasons, there is simply no plausible basis for impugning the validity of a local food procurement policy under either international or domestic trade rules.”

One of the few changes in this version of the Local Food Act is that the minister will now be required to report on government actions on local food every three years. My concern is that since there is no requirement for sub-targets, that report may very well be meaningless. The minister can stand up every three years and say how much the government loves local food, and we have no way of measuring—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The ministers are having quite a loud conversation over here. I’m having trouble hearing the speaker. If you want to have a little quorum, you might want to go outside with it. Thanks.

Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The minister can stand up every three years and say how much the government loves local food, and we have no way of measuring whether or not things are actually getting better or worse. The minister will stand up and say, “We are supporting Foodland Ontario,” as every government has done since it was established in 1977. They will stand up and talk about how great Ontario food tastes and likely have a photo op, but the people of Ontario will have no way of knowing whether the government is purchasing more or less local food. They will have no way of measuring whether the availability of local food is increasing. For the report to matter, the minister has to be required to set real, measurable goals in the procurement of local food and in actions to improve production, distribution, availability and knowledge of local food, and then the minister has to be required to report on his or her progress towards meeting those goals. Mr. Speaker, this Local Food Act is a disappointment and a missed opportunity.

I just quickly wanted to go over—and I did have a copy of it here. I think the minister opposite was a little concerned that some of my comments may not be addressed directly to the act.

1710

Now, I just want to point out the actual act and the explanatory note that we got with the act. This capsulizes what’s in the whole bill; this is the whole vision of the bill.

“The Local Food Act, 2013 is enacted. Highlights of the act are as follows:

“1. The week beginning on the Monday before Thanksgiving Day in each year is proclaimed as Local Food Week.

“2. The Minister of Agriculture and Food may establish”—may—“goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food. The minister must engage in consultation before setting the goals or targets. The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide information that would assist the minister in establishing goals or targets”—may—“understanding steps that are being taken or have been taken to meet a goal or target, or assessing progress that is being made or has been made toward meeting a goal or target.

“3. The minister must prepare a report about local food activities at least once every three years”—end of explanation of the whole bill in its entirety. So it really points out—my whole presentation is more about what isn’t in the bill, because there is absolutely nothing in the bill.

This Local Food Act is a disappointment and a missed opportunity. It is disappointing that after all her

commitment to introduce a strengthened food act, the Premier has made no substantial changes to the bill and taken no action to address the many issues facing our agriculture industry and the food processors. She has taken no action that would help get local food from our farm fields into stores and restaurants. She has taken no action to put real targets in place and commit this government to a leadership role in purchasing local foods.

We believe Ontario needs a real food act, one that addresses the many challenges our farmers are facing, such as red tape, spiralling hydro costs and a need for a dedicated fund for business risk management. We need a real food act that addresses the challenges with our food system, from the need to bring together supply through a regional food terminal, to red tape facing our processors, the lack of small abattoirs and the need for food literacy to be part of our curriculum.

While we are disappointed in the act that has been introduced, we are committed to work with stakeholder groups, processors and farmers to put forward amendments that will address some of these issues, to try and strengthen Ontario's agriculture industry and our food system. We believe in the importance of local food and our farmers, and we believe that they deserve a real food act.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise after the member from Oxford, and I will also refer to his nephew the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who did his leadoff the other day and said it best: This isn't a bill; this is a press release. That's what this is. It's a press release that didn't even get the press release correct, because, in fact, Local Food Week, as the member from Oxford pointed out, takes away Agriculture Week; it's the same week. They couldn't even get the dates right. Very, very said, and this in a place—and I have to point this out, Mr. Speaker; this is for local food awareness—that serves Seattle's Best Coffee downstairs in the cafeteria. Now, I know we don't produce coffee, but come on—Seattle's Best in the Legislature, and they have the audacity to proclaim Local Food Week. I love it.

I want to give a shout-out, however, to people who are getting it right, and that's in my community, people like the West End Food Co-op, who actually do something. They bring in local farmers. They set up every week when the weather is good. And the rest of the week, we have a store where we sell the produce, and it's done by the community for the community. The food we don't sell goes to the food bank. It's amazing.

My father was one of the co-signatories on the very first food co-op in Toronto, and that was the Karma Food Co-op, in the 1970s. So from the 1970s, we've been talking about local food and getting it right in downtown Toronto. And, of course, since there was ground, farmers have been getting it right.

The question is, why can't this government get it right? Why can't they get procurement right? This is not

brain surgery. Simply put your money where your mouth is and buy local in the ministries, in the government. This is so simple.

So, again, a press release, not a bill.

Great job, Uncle Ernie. Thank you.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Oxford as well as the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I stand here, Mr. Speaker—I was a mayor during the Harris years, and I can recall the great defenders of agriculture cutting 42 OMAFRA offices across the province. They didn't have a Buy Local strategy. They cut \$164 million out of the agriculture budget during their years.

I want to reference an article by the honourable member to the Lindsay Post, and I'll use two of his quotes: "While it's important to recognize local food we don't believe taking away Ontario Agriculture Week is the solution." Then he asks people to go to a specific website and send a message to Premier Wynne, asking her not to replace Ontario Agriculture Week. We're not replacing Ontario Agriculture Week. It's still there. They go hand in hand—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we finished?

Interjection: Yes.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can't understand why you can't have both in the same week. They go hand in hand; they complement each other. I respect our farmers. It's like telling a kid, "You were born on Christmas; we're going to make your birthday the 26th." It makes absolutely no sense at all.

The Premier has responded; the Minister of Agriculture and Food has responded to the member from Oxford's letter to the Lindsay Post. This is a quote from the minister: "When we considered potential dates for a Local Food Week, we acknowledged the importance of celebrating locally harvested food when these foods are at peak availability and accessibility—in the fall, the same time as Agriculture Week. Local Food Week enhances the profile for both farmers and food."

Mr. Speaker—

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is an absolute delight to stand up and give my colleague a standing O, because he hits it right on the head. This member gets it, in the sense that he has worked alongside farmers to get policy right.

I could just go on and on about everything he was absolutely perfectly correct on, but I would just invite people to check out the Hansard. Revisit this member's, Ernie Hardeman's, our agriculture critic, remarks because, again, he very astutely hit one issue after another after another that underlines and underscores the fact that this Local Food Act, Bill 36, just isn't hitting the mark.

I'd be remiss if I didn't specifically touch on comments that our agriculture critic shared with regard to

energy rates. He has consulted with farmers across this province, and he has heard time and time again that margins are very small. You know what? People pass all price increases along, all along the value chain line, and it stops at the farmer. But guess what? The farmer doesn't have anyone else to pass his increased production costs, like energy costs, along to. Farmers are seeing increases of upwards of \$1,000 on their monthly energy charges because of global adjustment.

It's sad to say that the Auditor General yesterday pointed out that their hard-earned dollars, their very small margins, those dollars that are hard to squeak out in some cases, are going to offset the cost of the cancelled gas plants. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever when we should be embracing local production.

I can tell you, Speaker, that our farmers in Ontario are astute businessmen. They cannot be placated by quaint lines like "farm gate to the plate" because—guess what?—it starts in the back 50. It starts in the barn. We need programs to make our farmers the best they can be.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It is truly an honour to be able to follow the member from Oxford in a debate about agriculture.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Aw, come on. Is your mom making you say that?

Mr. John Vanthof: He's my uncle, and I respect him. I don't agree with him a lot of times, but I respect him. But today he made a lot of good points, because I think on this side of the House, we just don't talk about agriculture; the ag critics on this side of the House—we know agriculture because we live it. I guess the Liberals just can't understand what's so significant about celebrating agriculture. We're going to leave it at that. That isn't the most important thing that the member for Oxford brought today.

1720

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell didn't use it in his response. They keep using—they have no goals or objectives in this act. I've heard a couple times, "Oh, that's because we're so worried about trade agreements." Folks here and folks at home: That's a total red herring. The problem with that is, we have got the Premier, who is Minister of Agriculture and Food, and she should know those trade agreements inside and out, because there is nothing more important to both supply management and non-supply management than understanding those trade agreements. To stand on that side of the House saying, "Oh, but it could be the trade agreements," and just using it for an excuse because they've written a bad bill—own up to it and say, "Okay."

You know what? We're offering—and the PCs also—to give good suggestions on how to make this a real bill, but please, don't use words that are very important to farmers across this province and across the country flippantly, like, "Oh, it might harm trade agreements." Know your stuff.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Huron–Bruce, and Timiskaming–Cochrane, particularly, for their kind words about the presentation.

I did want to just quickly cover the issue that the parliamentary assistant talked about: the Agriculture Week, and that somehow they have now come to the conclusion that it's going to be the same week—they're going to put them together. When we had the briefing from the ministry, in fact, the ministry staff said they hadn't given it any thought that it was on the same day, and if we could suggest another day, maybe we could just move it. That's what was told to us. Now, all of a sudden he's saying, "No, no, no. This was all our plan." They're making it up as they go along, and it seems to me that he would have been a lot better off coming up with some constructive suggestions.

The other thing, I think, that's really important—and I commend my nephew John for bringing it up—is the issue of being trade-compliant. I think the information that we were able to gather from England and the European common market and what they're doing in the United States and what they're doing in other jurisdictions—they are covered by trade agreements that are much more stringent than ours, because we already have exemptions in ours. But there is absolutely nothing that would indicate that setting acceptable targets and achievable targets would in any way even be considered as not being trade-compliant, and for the government to use that as an argument, I think, totally mitigates their credibility on understanding the file altogether. I think that explains why this is a fluff bill, that there's nothing in there that the minister is going to do; it's going to be a photo op to introduce the bill, and then we will not hear from it again, because she will not likely ever get to set any targets at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would it be appropriate to move a motion that it's 6:23 Standard Time at this point in time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It probably wouldn't, and I'm sure that the Clerks' table is quite capable of taking care of the timekeeping, but thanks for your additional help.

Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to the importance of local food and to the Local Food Act, G36. I just want to thank, actually, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his comments yesterday; I had a good opportunity to learn from the lived experience of a farmer in this Legislature. By extension and by relation, I want to thank the member from Oxford for his comments as well.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I cannot hear a word that the member is saying, not a word. I think it

would be appropriate if the Speaker can hear, at least, what is transpiring, in case, for some reason, she says something that you may not like. But I can't hear her, so I would suggest that if you want to talk loud, take it outside.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much. I'm not going to start from the beginning. I was so wise in my opening comments; I'm sorry you missed them.

But I do want to say I'm going to focus my comments this afternoon on the stakeholders that haven't been consulted fully and the stakeholders who actually haven't been listened to—thus, the act as it is before us today is not fully informed.

I also just wanted to do a special shout-out to my in-laws, Walter and Shirley Fife. They're first generation off the farm. The Fifes came to Ontario many years ago, and they brought with them Red Fife wheat, which has made a resurgence across the province and, indeed, across the country. It makes some great bread, hearty bread. It actually allowed Saskatchewan to be prosperous in those early years. I might also say it makes some good beer as well, Red Fife beer. I'm sure they're going to be very impressed with the beer comment.

The education that I mentioned earlier, from the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane and Oxford—it is about education, local food. Knowledge actually is needed on this portfolio. I do think that there has been—as was said yesterday, people have rediscovered their connection to local food and the people who grow it. I think that's been a long time coming, and I think it should actually drive the debate and discussion as it relates to this act.

I did want to say why this act is so important, not only for the people of the province, but also for people of Waterloo region. Before I go into the weaknesses and the criticism of the bill, I do want to frame this conversation around why it is so important. Certainly, for Waterloo region, it may be of interest to some of the members in this House to learn that an economic impact study in Waterloo region found that every job in the agriculture sector supports four additional jobs in the local economy, and that each dollar of sales in the agricultural sector generates an extra \$2.40 in sales of the local economy. This is a job creator. There's an economic impact to local food that I think actually has been missed. The potential has not been realized in the province.

In addition, though, there's the other side of the conversation around the actual health benefits of local food and what it means for a community. In Waterloo region, a 2005 study noted that current dietary habits of Waterloo region residents do not meet the dietary recommendations of Canada's Food Guide. Over half—58%—of residents consume fewer than the daily recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables. Evidence suggests that people are more likely to meet dietary recommendations when they have ready access to grocery stores with healthy, affordable food as opposed to convenience stores that are mostly packaged and processed food.

There are so many important reasons to get this Local Food Act right. I think that those who have spoken already before me have clearly already outlined the weaknesses in a broad and actually detailed way. But I think we need to remember that this is really a plan to create a plan. I guess the positive side of that is that it opens the door to a conversation about how important local food is.

There clearly are weaknesses in the way that the act has been constructed. The bill itself does not tackle the issue of the need for local food and the attention that local food deserves. It fails to illustrate or even to promote how much we as Ontarians value the abundance of local food that we have access to in this province. Actually, there's evidence to suggest that we're willing to pay extra for it because we understand the connection that we, as consumers, have to the agriculture industry.

I wanted to put a little focus right now on what municipalities have been able to do and also what local food activists have been able to do. In Waterloo region, we have a Waterloo region food charter that the municipality has endorsed. It's quite comprehensive. The Waterloo region food charter's vision, just for the record—which would be a good start to inform this act—was recently endorsed by the region of Waterloo's social planning committee. It states that “a healthy, just, and sustainable food system is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way, and that supports our rural communities. Such a food system promotes social justice, population health, and profitable farms, reflects and sustains local culture, and supports ecological viability.”

Now this is a vision for a local food act, because the Local Food Act should be more comprehensive. It should be more expansive in its goals. We need to be more ambitious for the local food movement. The goals of the local food initiative should be to connect people to the local food system, including students and seniors. I'm going to talk a little bit about the importance of education and the importance of local food to positively impact the education system, but I'm also going to talk a little bit about seniors and, as seniors age, the importance of solid nutrition.

1730

I was sitting on the finance committee and was quite honestly shocked to learn, when the not-for-profit sector came in, that seniors in our long-term-care facilities have a \$7-a-day allowance for food—\$7. It's quite incredible. How can you take care of a senior in a responsible way and ensure that they have the proper nutrition for \$7 a day?

So we need to stay focused on connecting people to the local food system, we need to support the economic development around local food, we need to support access to healthy food and we need to support ecological health. As I mentioned, education is a key component of that.

The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable is one of the groups that wrote an open letter to the Premier. Because it's open, I wanted to address a couple of the points they made. This is a letter sent to the Premier to encourage her to incorporate some of their expansive research and ideas into the act and, to a large degree, from what I can tell, most of their recommendations were not included or accepted. But you know what? All hope is not lost, because we've indicated that we're willing to work on this act and to support it, and at second reading, we will be pursuing some of the recommendations from those informed stakeholders from the local communities that, for some reason, were left out of the consultation process.

The letter dated March 20, less than a month ago, encourages the Premier to "reintroduce the Ontario Local Food Act," but also asks the Premier to "broaden the act's scope in order to make it a meaningful and comprehensive policy that is able to address a wide range of food issues in Ontario."

I did find it interesting, in the member from Oxford's one-hour comments, that the Premier did promise to strengthen the Local Food Act during the Liberal leadership race, and yet we just got essentially the same act back after she became the leader of the Liberal Party. So something wrong has happened here. It's a missed opportunity. But why bring forward something that you know isn't good enough?

So, just to go back to the open letter to the Premier, the stakeholders who had a vested interest and who have been pursuing this issue for many years, go on to say, "It is our desire to build a food system that makes healthy, sustainable food accessible to all members of our community." They have identified six food system priorities to develop, and one of the key priorities is to develop a local food infrastructure. This is a key piece that's missing, and it focuses on "reorienting the food system to focus on locally grown and processed foods" which "would cut down on the carbon footprint associated with the food we eat while also supporting our local economies."

It also involves "leveraging the purchasing power of public institutions to support Ontario's agriculture," which "would create new markets for local food, thereby helping to support and scale up local food growers and processors."

Now, this is what we've heard from farmers for a number of years. They have products that are, as we've all said, the best in the world—the best produce, the best vegetables. This is something that already should be a key part of the act.

The open letter goes on to say, "We also believe that a strong and meaningful Local Food Act would need to be comprehensive, and we encourage you to consider including policies that take into account the connections between the environment, the economy and health."

They've also used research from Sustain Ontario, and that round table endorsed a letter to the Ontario government last July.

The Legislature was prorogued. A lot of good work, private members' bills included, was interrupted. So we're back at the table again, trying to get this right. I know that there is frustration out there in the broader community that we have to go through this process again, but we're determined, as I said, to get it right.

That letter from July "advocated that an Ontario Local Food Act should specifically address a number of important issues related to food, including:

"—ensuring that all Ontarians have access to, and the means to obtain, safe, healthy, local and culturally acceptable food;

"—providing Ontarians with the information, knowledge, skills, resources and relationships to support healthy eating and healthy choices where they live, work, learn and play;

"—protecting and promoting a diverse and sustainable food production system that contributes to an equitable and sustainable economy."

Essentially, what we're talking about here is a holistic Local Food Act that doesn't just stay focused on some minor targets. We need to be more ambitious on this. The fact that for some reason this act says that this will help us "aspire" to be better—legislation doesn't aspire us to be better. Listening to people who have the informed, lived experience of how to make the local food industry or agri-food more accessible and more connected to the people and more healthy: This is where we should be focusing our attention.

Some of the key points from Sustain Ontario worth noting:

"Food and food systems are central to the well-being of Ontarians and are integrally linked to Ontario's population, economic, social and environmental health. Through an Ontario Local Food Act, food and food systems could:

"—increase benefits to local and regional economies, communities and farmers"—and I just gave some evidence of that;

"—contribute to population health through the alleviation of hunger, chronic disease and obesity;

"—create a healthy food future by developing healthy food habits and knowledge in Ontario's children and youth;

"—operate within a framework which ensures the protection and conservation of land, soil and water upon which we all depend."

You have an act that the government has put forward, and yet even in Waterloo region earlier in the year, a recent OMB decision actually sets the protection of land, soil and water at risk. So you have contravening pieces of legislation and forces here at play which a Local Food Act, if it was truly comprehensive, would actually prevent from happening.

To that point, though: Sustain Ontario actually encourages the government to create an interministerial working group to address these issues in a Local Food Act. We've talked about interministerial working groups for many years now, and groups from the community have advo-

cated for them—especially on issues like mental health, physical health, the economy—and for some reason we just can't get it right. This would be a great way to pilot various ministries actually working together to make a healthier Ontario, a more productive Ontario and a more prosperous Ontario. These are the stakeholders that have put forward their ideas.

I'm very proud of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. Their theme is, Connecting Our Community to the Work of Building a Healthy Food System. They do a lot of great work. As a politician, I try to sit at their table on a regular basis and listen to some of their challenges and listen to some of their advice, because that's essentially what I see as our responsibility.

The NDP actually had put forward a buy-Ontario commitment which would make it the law that Ontario's money is spent here in Ontario and which would encourage food processors to purchase local foods. And there's good reason to do this. In 2004, Ontario exported approximately \$2.5 million worth of asparagus, for instance, and it imported \$1.7 million worth of asparagus. In 2004, Ontario exported \$93 million worth of tomatoes and imported \$31 million worth of tomatoes. Those who are listening, if anybody is listening, would quite honestly find that to be nonsensical on several levels. The study concluded that imported produce is widely available in Waterloo region, for instance, during the peak of a product's growing season locally.

Obvious environmental ramifications of redundant trade have been seen in this province for a number of years. One example is that we have much higher greenhouse gas emissions than necessary. This is one of the side effects of not having a comprehensive local food act, that we're missing the mark on several levels from an environmental perspective.

1740

I can give you some examples from the region of Waterloo's public health study Food Miles—that's a study; it's called Food Miles—the average food item studied travelled 4,497 kilometres to the Waterloo region and produced and generated 1.3 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions for every one kilogram of food transported. All food items studied were available locally. There's a real disconnect between the way we are trying to move local food into the centre when we actually don't have the policies in place and the supports in place to support farmers, for instance, and also to grow that economy.

The same item, actually, on that example, if it was purchased locally only travels 30 kilometres and it contributes 0.008 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions. There's no comparison there, really.

I did want to focus a little bit on education, because as the former president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I wanted to let you know that there is a huge movement in education to try to connect schools and children to their environment. It's really disconcerting, actually, to see how students in our system have no connection to where their food comes from. Even when you go through the supermarket, if there isn't

a concerted effort to educate children where food comes from—what really is local, what really is organic, what really is genetically modified—if we are not teaching food literacy, the piece about what really is good for you and how to read a label—these are so important. I just wanted to say we can't do this alone. I think that we need the private sector to come on board as well, and farmers. Their voices need to be part of a true, informed stakeholder.

We have lots of leaders. In Waterloo region we have Herrle's, a local farm. It's 225 acres. They sell their own produce or they source only Ontario produce. It's a very simple model. The loyalty to this place is astounding, and for good reason: They have a good product. We know that we're supporting a local family; people like that. Also, they have a true commitment to education. Since 1992, they've had school trips, and so they've invited students into their farm. They've connected the dots with food, with nutrition, with the economy, but they're doing it in a very sustainable and local way, which quite honestly needs to be commended.

I think that restaurants and businesses now understand that consumers want this. Even our local deli, our fine foods, Vincenzo's, one of my favourite places on the earth, has organic local food. I shop there to get that.

This Local Food Act needs a lot of work. We need to make it better. There's some urgency to this conversation as well. I look forward to debating it further.

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

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Ça me fait plaisir de me lever en Chambre aujourd'hui pour parler de ce projet de loi.

J'aime parler de ce projet de loi parce que dans ma circonscription j'ai deux marchés où les marchands, les cultivateurs, peuvent venir vendre leurs fruits et légumes.

It's a pleasure for me to stand up today and speak about the proposed local food bill. If passed, this bill will support, promote and celebrate the good things that are grown and made in Ontario. We want residents of Ontario to be able to eat local food at home, in restaurants, at work, in school, wherever they are.

In restaurants: I know in my community there are quite a few restaurants now that are making a lot of publicity about the fact that they serve local food, and it's very, very popular. They have seized this market and now they are out advertising it, and it's very, very popular.

I know that I have here une petite page, Sophia, and Sophia knows about the farmers' market in Ottawa. In my riding we have two farmers' markets that are very, very popular. We know that when we go there, we buy good food. We want to have local food on our table. We want to encourage our farmers, and we want to celebrate their success.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to again comment on the comments from the member from Kitchener—

Waterloo. I'm glad to see that someone from an urban riding is able to speak on this bill.

I'm from a rural riding, the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. But unless I heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo incorrectly, produce and vegetables are in fact the same thing, but that's just for the record.

I look at this particular bill, and having read it through several times, I was looking for what I would call meat and potatoes. There is no meat and there definitely are no potatoes, just a lot of starch somewhere along there. Of course, I fail to see how important this particular bill is. We do know that the self-proclaimed Minister of Agriculture, self-appointed Minister of Agriculture, is perhaps doing her best, but this particular bill, in my opinion, Speaker, is in fact just a bunch of words.

We want to be able to perhaps take a look at this bill in greater depth, and assuming that it will in fact pass second reading and get into committee, we want to make it more substantial so that it really does what it's intended to do or at least what we feel it should be intended to do, and that is to address the needs specifically of the farming community throughout Ontario—rural Ontario, I might add.

Having said that, I think that much has been said about this particular bill at this point in time. I look forward to, at a later point in time, addressing this particular bill in greater depth and detail so that we as a PC Party, in conjunction with perhaps the other members of this astute Legislature, can in fact make this bill more substantial.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is a pleasure to rise in support of a lot of the comments that came from my seat-mate. She really touched on some very important issues throughout her discussion.

I just wanted to touch on the purpose of this bill, and then I'll go into some of the other concerns I have with the bill. It says in the purpose—and the purpose is good. It says, “The purposes of this act are as follows:

“To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.

“To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food.

“To encourage the development of new markets for local food.”

Who's going to argue with that? However, this is my concern: If you look at “Goals and targets” under 4(1)—“The minister may, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food.” That's my first concern.

Under “Consultation,” it goes on to say that “in the minister's opinion, have an interest in the goal or target.”

Then you go into “Scope

“(3) A goal or target may be general or particular in its application and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may be established in respect of....”

Then we go into “Information to be provided to minister

“5(1) The minister may direct a public sector....”

Then we go into “Public sector organization to provide information

“(2) If the minister directs....” And then it goes “specified by the minister.”

Then it goes into the final section, which is under “Regulations

“7. The minister may make regulations....”

There are a lot of may's, if's, could's and should's, but there's really not the wording to really look at developing regional economic opportunities that are so desperately needed for a lot of these communities and a lot of the farmers in this bill.

1750

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise today and to speak about the farming industry, probably our biggest employer in the province of Ontario. I worked with farmers for about 30 years as a drainage consultant, and I always found that the farmers that survived the 1960s and 1970s were always excellent farmers, but they were also excellent businessmen. It's a tough business, but we have excellent farmers out there, and they do a great job.

One of the things that we've talked about is healthy kids. I hope, if we bring forward something for healthy kids, that we tie the foods in the schools—that we try to get the local products out there.

Minister McMeekin—he was agricultural minister last summer, I think it was—was down in the market in the member for Ottawa–Vanier's riding, and we had about 30 local food producers there. It was all in trying to get better ways to get their food out. It's so much better, the local food. I mean, the tomatoes—all you can say about the ones that we get imported into here is that they're red. They taste the same as radishes; they're red. So we have to encourage our local products a lot more. We have to do that. It's not only much better food for our kids and for ourselves, but it's encouraging a big industry.

The market in Ottawa is apparently in some difficulties, according to a report in the Sun the other day, so we have to make sure we get in there, use that produce, encourage those farmers and keep them there. They're not going to stay there unless they can make a dollar.

I am very much in support of this bill. It's going to help us make sure that Ontario produce gets a bigger percentage of the market in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for the feedback on the comments. I think we're all very clear that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. I'm not sure what's going to be happening from the PCs; we hear a lot of “No, no, no” from this side of the House.

What you've heard today from us, I think, though, is that we've identified the issues that need to be fixed, we've made a commitment to support it, but we've also said that we have some tangible, specific issues that we need to be addressed for it to go any further. I hope you've heard very clearly that stakeholders were not

listened to prior to the bringing-forward of this legislation, and there is so much potential that can happen around the Local Food Act.

Certainly at finance committee, we heard from several delegations. One even recommended—and you’ll like this, the member from Welland—that local farmers’ markets could have special permits to distribute Ontario wine for fixed periods of time. You’d get a lot more people out to the farmers’ market, I think, and also you’d be supporting both the local farmers’ market and the winery industry.

I think we have to be really clear, though, that this needs to be stronger. It needs to be better. The number of farmers in the province of Ontario is falling. We do not have a vision for the agricultural industry, for five years or for 25 years, and if we don’t get working on that right now, we’re going to lose more and more land and we’re going to lose more and more people who actually want to become farmers. Education is the key—political leadership from this House is also a key factor—and I’m looking forward to making this act work for the people of the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on April 8 by the Minister of the Environment. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Given the Liberals’ propensity to introduce new taxes, I think it’s important to remind viewers at home about the Liberals’ eco tax record. Plus, I know the parliamentary assistant had difficulty understanding the facts I laid out last night, and I don’t think I saw him jotting down too many notes, so I’d like to provide a bit of a refresher on the Liberal history of eco taxation, so he can hopefully knock some sense into his environment minister.

As we all know, the Liberals created eco taxes in 2008 as part of the Liberal taxation binge, which almost included an onerous, job-killing carbon tax. The godfather of eco taxes, who is none other than Dalton McGuinty, introduced Ontario’s first-ever eco tax scheme in 2008. This move toward eco taxation expanded rapidly under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals.

In just two years, the Liberal government introduced three eco tax regulations, set up three waste diversion programs and created two new recycling monopolies, or what the parliamentary assistant likes to call “industry-run recycling cartels.”

First, there’s regulation 542/06, which the Liberals established to create their Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste program. Not only did this Liberal-created regulation begin the use of eco taxation in the province, but it led to the Liberals’ eco tax fiasco in July 2010—which I know this member is quite familiar with, in front of me—when eco taxes were imposed on thousands of household products, including everything from detergent to shampoo to pharmaceuticals.

Instead of protecting consumers, the Liberal minister responsible for consumer protection was MIA, while the former environment minister defended eco taxes. In fact, the former minister, along with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, encouraged companies to begin displaying the eco tax amount on price tags as a way to continue its multi-million dollar eco tax scheme.

Just think that today Stewardship Ontario now collects more than \$51 million a year in eco taxes to run the Liberals’ Orange Drop program for household hazardous materials.

Then there’s regulation 393/04, which established the Liberals’ Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Program. Using this regulation, the Liberals not only introduced eco taxes on everything from iPods to TVs to computers; they also set up a new, unaccountable recycling monopoly, or again what the member opposite would refer to as a cartel. Do you know how much eco tax revenue this organization now collects? It’s \$88 million a year.

Then there’s the tire eco tax program, which the Liberal government created for no other reason than it wanted to help their buddies set up another recycling monopoly.

Regulation 84/03 gives Ontario Tire Stewardship the power to impose massive eco taxes on all sorts of tires. If that wasn’t bad enough, earlier this year the environment minister developed a new eco tax formula under regulation 45/13 which sent eco taxes up by as much as 2,200% on farm tires.

In response to farmer outrage, the environment minister went back to work, tinkering with the eco tax funding formula. What was the best he could come up with? Break the exorbitant eco tax increases in half—half for this year, half for next year.

When I asked the environment minister about these massive eco tax increases in question period on Monday, he said the eco tax funding formula is “beneficial” and “reasonable.”

Let me assure the government members present tonight: Ontario’s hard-working farmers wholeheartedly disagree. The Liberal tire tax formula is detrimental and unreasonable.

I think comments like this just show how really out of touch the Liberal government is from reality. Rather than take responsibility for the eco tax mess they created, the Liberals continue to make up silly stories, hoping the press will just buy whatever they feed them.

So let’s just recap how absurd the environment minister has been acting over the last few weeks. After getting

caught for forcing onerous new eco taxes on Ontarians, the environment minister first played dumb. He said he did not know why there were eco taxes, even though he sent a signed letter to Ontario Electronic Stewardship earlier this year, giving them the authority to jack up the eco tax on big-screen TVs by 40%.

He then pretended to be suffering from a sudden case of selective amnesia when questioned about farm tire eco taxes, even though he created the tire eco tax formula earlier this year. He then promised to make companies bury eco taxes in the price of their products at the very same time that the Premier was out telling the media that consumers and businesses needed to understand that eco taxes are a necessary cost of dealing with waste.

Instead of being bold and correcting his leader, which would have taken courage, the environment minister backtracked on eco taxes and even told the Canadian Press he now doesn't even know if he can get rid of them.

The environment minister needs to stop speaking out of both sides of his mouth and actually for once start telling Ontarians the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa–Orléans and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to continue our engaging dialogue from last evening.

I would like to begin by offering my deepest sympathies to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga. I do believe his intentions are sincere and he would truly like to do what is best in this instance and fix this mess of a Tory legacy. It's only common sense. Unfortunately, I believe his associates have placed him in a very difficult situation.

First, the deficiencies in waste diversion were the result of flaws in the Waste Diversion Act, a Tory law. That act calls for the formation of recycling cartels which suppress innovation, competitive energies and the free market. Second, his own leader was asleep at the switch when the Waste Diversion Act was approved by the Tory cabinet. It was his job then to protect consumers, but instead he gave them the eco fees.

It is really one of the toughest jobs in the Legislature to be PC critic for the environment: Rather than having the opportunity to engage in constructive, solution-based dialogue, he is forced to deliver hollow vitriol.

I believe that my colleague, if given the opportunity, would acknowledge that yes, indeed, his party's Waste Diversion Act has stifled diversion in our province by facilitating an environment where recycling cartels are able to shift the onus and responsibility away from individual producers. He might agree that recycling a product at the end of its useful life is simply a cost of doing business. But of course, that is not the mentality of his party. We still have the federal leader of that party who believes you can throw the carbon into the atmos-

phere forever or, as we have here, have no disposal of products.

He might agree that recycling a product at the end of its useful life is simply a cost of doing business. It makes sense. If you produce something that's going to cause environmental damage, you pay for the cost to look after the noxious substances. It's no different than paying an employee's wages, transporting goods or training an employee. He might even agree with the approach we intend to introduce before the Legislature, one that engages the innovative creativity of individual private sector producers.

February marked the one-year anniversary of the announcement of our new action plan on waste, one that would put us back on track and refocus attention on our major waste management goal, which is diversion. Since we announced our new waste plan, we have made progress on a number of fronts. We have implemented a regulation making industry responsible for ensuring that consumers are able to return their waste pharmaceuticals and sharps to retailers. As a result, Ontarians are being provided with access to convenient, free collection sites where they can safely dispose of waste pharmaceuticals and sharps. That makes sense.

We have approved a new compost framework to divert more organic waste from landfills and help municipalities safely manage sewage sludge, as well as open the door to further investment in green technologies.

We established a program, managed by the Recycling Council of Ontario, to ensure proper management of fire extinguishers, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent light bulbs and tubes and mercury-containing devices, as well as pharmaceuticals or sharps dropped off at municipal depots. This ensures municipalities are not burdened with the additional costs related to managing these wastes.

The next step will be to move these products fully to an extended producer responsibility model. That makes sense. Under this approach, the job of government will be to set clear environmental requirements, to ensure end-of-life products are recovered, reused and recycled, generating new investment, new products and new jobs instead of generating pollution.

Speaker, I believe the direct result of this is that a true void has emerged in this debate. We have not been given the opportunity to hear what I can only assume to be the truly inspired and impassioned ideas on the future of waste diversion in this province that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga possesses. I encourage my colleague to share his ideas. I invite him, should he wish, to cross the aisle and engage us on this and many other important reforms.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margaret R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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