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Monday 22 April 2013

Lundi 22 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 avril 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that my good friends from Kingston, John and Diane Fielding, are here today. They may not have come into the chamber yet, but they're here to watch question period and to have lunch with their MPP.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome the parents of my page Theodore Vaidhyan to the Legislature today. He is acting as a captain, and his parents, Titus and Elizabeth, and sister Tricia are also here today. They're seated in the east gallery. I want to extend them a very warm welcome. I'm very proud of him as well.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome today Jim Facette. He's not quite through security yet, but he's the president and CEO of the Canadian Propane Association. Welcome to see what's happening at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons acknowledging organ awareness week. Do we have agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

Further introduction of guests?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'd like to welcome the newest resident of Ontario, who's watching on TV, Benjamin Leone, son of MPP Rob Leone and wife, Kate. The smaller brother of Alex and Aiden was born on Saturday, April 20, weighing in at 8 pounds, 14 ounces. The healthy family is at home; I know they're watching on TV. Welcome Benjamin Leone.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member from Leeds–Grenville will not want to hurt his hand.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm excited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can feel that excitement. We're all excited about the birth of a new Ontarian, so we obviously offer our deepest congratulations and healthy wishes to the entire family. I'm sure he's watching.

Clarification from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Are the ribbons available on both sides? Are they now being distributed?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. All ribbons are being distributed on both sides of the galleries.

Further introductions?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Rick Ciccarelli from the Labour Education Centre. He's here at Queen's Park this morning to speak about community benefits agreements. I'd like to welcome him in the Legislature.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome all members of Leafs Nation who are observing question period this morning and are looking forward to the member from Nepean–Carleton to acknowledge the fact that the Leafs have made it to the playoffs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to diminish this opportunity, so the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of all the eastern Ontario members, with the exception of the man beside me, who is a Leafs fan, I must say we're still praying in eastern Ontario.

To the member for Newmarket–Aurora: Congratulations. I just want you to know, though—to all the Leafs fans—the little stick that you're going to use after May 1 is not a golf club; it's actually a hockey stick, and we've got a little bit of experience in eastern Ontario with the Ottawa Senators playing in the playoffs.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, could you please brief the assembly on the additional costs in your budget from the Liberal government's decision to cancel both the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Members of the opposition are inquiring about something that they said they would do. Members of the opposition are saying, "We'll cancel the power plant." In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was there on a bus, doing a press conference, with a pink elephant, no less, saying, "We are the ones who will stop the power plant. We are the ones who will cancel it." We said we would move it. The member now is suggesting that somehow, what they said they would do, they now say they could not do. We, on this side of the House, said we would—a promise they made that we kept. We've accounted for it, and it is going through as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I got an answer to a very straightforward question. I think that when you're—I recognize that this is the minister's first budget as finance minister, and as some of my colleagues say, hopefully his last so that we get Ontario back on track in the province. Surely your budget must be close to finality, if not ready to go.

You are aware of the gas plant cancellation costs. After all, you were in on the decision. You were a key component of making that situation, and now you see the actual numbers.

You can play political games, Minister. You can continue the sort of political stonewalling that has become the typical Wynne-McGuinty government approach, or you could just answer a very simple and direct question as finance minister. Your budget's ready to go. Why don't you just please tell us what are the costs that you've assigned for the Liberal decision to cancel both the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have accommodated a price that was established a couple of years back, and it was put forward last year when it was at \$190 million, and the contingencies and so forth going forward have been accommodating for a number of initiatives.

But more importantly, the member opposite is right now suggesting—and he's committed this—he hasn't even read the budget, doesn't even know what it states. We have been on target; we've exceeded our target. Our fiscal controls are working; we are en route to balance the budget. Four years running, we've beat those targets, and more jobs are being created.

The response is, "We don't care what it has been doing. We're not even going to look at it. We're just going to defeat it without even reading it." Now, that's a shame.

1040

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If there's going to be any assistance from me, I'd like to ask for it first.

New question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. The minister uses the term "it's a shame." What's clearly a shame is, the minister, who's preparing a budget, can't even stand in his place and tell us exactly what the costs are going to be to cancel. I mean, let's be very direct here. You've been in on this decision to cancel the gas plants from day one. You are intimately aware of the details of how much this is going to cost taxpayers and increase the fiscal hole in your budget.

If I heard you correctly, Minister, you said that \$190 million has been booked; I was listening closely to your answer. So are you telling us that the hole in your budget is only \$190 million for the cancellation of the gas plants, when the Auditor General himself says it's much more than that? Are you really sticking to that old story that

it's only \$190 million? Or will you come clean and tell us exactly how big of a hole your cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants costs the Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're moving forward on a very strong, balanced budget, a budget that doesn't put at risk our economic recovery. It's a budget that speaks to the needs of the people of Ontario, and it's not about political games. This is about what's in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The opposition are obviously gunning for an election. That is not what the people of Ontario want. That is not what we want, on this side of the House. We want to work collaboratively with all members of the House for the best interests of the people of Ontario. This budget is going to speak to them. It's going to be a balanced approach that talks about the way forward to balance, and it's going to initiate even more economic recovery, more economic stimulus, more jobs.

Our restraint measures, as well as our stimulus measures, are working. We've beat targets; we're exceeding results. We're ahead of all other areas of Canada. That's what we should be doing together for the people of Ontario, and that's what we're going to be doing going forward from the next budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, back to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, Leader. That was the final supplementary. You're now on a new question. Thank you.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Still to the Minister of Finance, who had a bit of a slip: He said it's a "balanced budget." The reality is, with how hard Ontarians are working, with the amount of revenue that's come in, it should be a balanced budget in Ontario. We should be creating jobs. We should be at the top in Canada, not at the back of the pack.

The minister can't answer a very basic question. I know you know the answer, because you were there at the cabinet table when Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne made the decision to cancel the gas plants. You were the finance minister. You were one of the members for whom taxpayers may have paid anywhere from \$650 million to over \$1 billion to save your seat. This is not just simple wasteful spending. This is a direct and conscious decision of your Liberal government to use taxpayer dollars to cancel gas plants.

Minister, I'll give you one last chance on this. Will you please tell us exactly how much you have booked in your fiscal plan for the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants? It's a simple question. Why not a simple answer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward the materials necessary. The AG has signed off on our fiscal matters. We've been very open and transparent. We're the government that didn't hide \$5 billion

when they were last elected. We're not the government that is putting forward any secrets. We're being very open and transparent, and we're not selling off assets that are going to provide even more revenue and more growth for the province of Ontario. We're going to continue doing what's in the best interests of our public.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, our deficit is under control. We have what it takes to balance our books by 2017-18. We're exceeding our targets four years running. Our growth in spending last year was under 1%. Coming forward in our next budget, you're going to see even better results.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm sadly startled, Speaker, that the Minister of Finance says they've had no secrets; he has said they've been open and transparent. Then I ask the minister, why did you bury 40,000 to 60,000 documents, why did you keep the costs covered for so long, and why were you in on the decision around the cabinet table to bury the costs of the gas plant cancellation? It was PC members here in the House, supported by the NDP, who brought the contempt motion to the floor, who got the answers here. You try to keep it hidden. We want taxpayers to know the answers. It's far from no secrets. It's far from open and transparent.

Minister, this shakes our very confidence in your ability to bring in a budget that will actually get us some balance. It shakes our confidence in your ability to grow the economy. It shakes our confidence in this government's ability to help those 500,000 women and men, our friends, neighbours and relatives, who are out of work.

I'll ask you, why won't you be honest with taxpayers and tell us exactly what this is going to cost? Surely to goodness it must be in the budget plan. You know the numbers. You made the decision.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The people of Ontario want their representatives to represent them. I have been representing my community with pride and with responsibility. I have stood in this House, even prior to being elected, to defend the interests of our communities right across the province.

A mistake was made. We corrected it. You agreed with it. It should have been done much earlier. As a result, we're taking the actions necessary and we're taking the decisions that are necessary to get it right.

Mr. Speaker, we made other tough decisions, like tax reform, like lowering business taxes, like lowering consumer taxes, like ensuring that we have a value-added tax system that makes us competitive. As a result, we're the third-largest jurisdiction in North America to attract direct foreign investment. People are coming to Ontario. More businesses are coming here, and more jobs are being created because of the actions that we've taken.

The opposition are advocating a slash-and-burn policy that would hurt our—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm incredulous that the finance minister would simply dismiss the cancellation of Oakville and Mississauga as a mistake that was made—a mistake that was made. This was not ordinary incompetence. This wasn't standard waste we've come to expect. This was you putting the Liberal Party ahead of the interests of taxpayers, ahead of the interests of jobs, ahead of the interests of ratepayers in our province. It was a deliberate decision to spend money to save Liberal seats, including yours.

We see what the thinking is. The minister says he has a duty to represent his constituents; he has a duty to be their representative. Sir, you have a duty to spend taxpayer money wisely. You have a duty to look out for the money that people send to Queen's Park, and you have the gall to spend a billion dollars to save your own seat. That's not what a finance minister does.

Speaker, clearly, it's time to change the government if this finance minister thinks he should spend a billion dollars to save his own seat. We can do a lot better than this. This finance minister is clearly out of his depth.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I said also that I have a duty and a responsibility to the province of Ontario. That's why the lessons learned—what we've done in terms of what we're going to do going forward in the siting of such projects will be corrected, and that is what's necessary.

We're always working for the best interests of the entire province, one thing that the opposition member and the leader has not been doing. In fact, he has been talking down Ontario by calling us a banana republic.

We are the province that has been leading all of Canada with more jobs than the rest of Canada combined. We're taking the necessary steps to try to promote certain sectors of our economy for greater economic renewal.

The opposition members would rather fight as opposed to collaborate. They would rather put us down than pick us up. Fortunately, the people of Ontario know better. They're willing to work. They're doing their job, and we're going to do ours, as well.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In an interview in today's Wall Street Journal, the finance minister is quoted as saying, "People are aware of the fiscal realities before us. They know the government must take a measured approach to bend the cost curve and control our spending." Does the Premier agree with this view?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker; I absolutely agree that we need to take the measures necessary to stay on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. That's exactly what the Minister of Finance has been

talking about in the previous questions. It's what the leader of the third party will see as we bring our budget forward. That is what is expected of us by the people of Ontario.

In order to be able to deliver the services that everyone in this province needs, we need to make sure that we have fiscal responsibility along with investment in a fairer society. That's the balanced approach our budget will take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, other media reports indicate that the government still plans to phase in new corporate tax loopholes that will let Ontario's biggest corporations write off the HST when they buy gas or take clients out on the town.

If the government is trying to bend the cost curve, why are they investing over a billion dollars a year in yet another no-strings-attached corporate tax loophole? Is that what the people of this province can expect from the Liberals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to speak to the details, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to say that I think what is necessary now is to look at the budget in its entirety. It is an organic document in the sense that there are supports, obviously, for business—it's very important that we make sure that business is competitive and that we can bring business to the province—but at the same time, there are areas of concern that we have identified, that we know are areas that we need to be working on, and some of those I think the leader of the opposition would like to work on with us. Whether it's home care, whether it's youth unemployment, whether it's making sure that the social assistance system is unravelled in the sense that it becomes a more rational system—all of those things are areas that we want to work on. At the same time, we have to get our fiscal house in order.

We need to work towards a balanced budget in 2017-18, and that's what you'll see in the budget.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, \$1.3 billion goes a lot of way to make the books balance, I've got to tell you.

Look, it's people who make our economy work, and it's people who need to be the priority when we plan for the future. But time and time again, they see a government that just doesn't seem to care about their challenges. They're scrambling to find home care for loved ones. They worry about their kids finding a decent job. They pay the bills that keep climbing higher and higher and higher, and the government tells them that they have to tighten their belts even more. But when it comes to handing Ontario's largest corporations yet another tax break, the belt can't be loosened quick enough.

How can the Premier tell people they have to pay more and expect less while she's handing Ontario's largest corporations over a billion dollars a year in HST breaks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party knows that the finance minister is working

with the federal finance minister on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, because there is a connection between what the federal government does and what we do here in the province.

The reality is, the budget document will cover a range of issues. We are taking a balanced approach to putting this budget in place.

Indeed, our businesses are competitive and need to be competitive, and we are demonstrating that business is coming to Ontario. Jobs are being created. At the same time, we need to make sure that those services that are so critical to people's lives every single day improve, Mr. Speaker. There's always a way to make those services better and to continue to make sure that our young people, our First Nations children, our seniors, people across the province who need government supports have those supports.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. People are hoping for a new approach, but all Ontarians see is a Liberal government that's the same old same old. They see a government that has no problem spending what could be more than a billion dollars to cancel two private power deals, or spending over a billion dollars on a new corporate tax loophole, Speaker. But when it comes to a First Start program to get 25,000 young people working, or eliminating the home care wait-list in this province, the government is suddenly very cautious.

Will the government tell Ontarians whether they should expect another status quo Liberal budget this time around? Or will the Premier finally commit to putting families first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I know that the leader of the third party—she and I have had conversations about these issues, and she has been very public about the issues that she identified. They were issues, in fact, that I had already identified during my leadership campaign, that were things that I want to work on. I've been very clear, whether it's home care or whether it's youth unemployment, those are things that are of deep concern to me, and they are things that we need to advance.

We need to make sure that we move the bar on those issues, because we know that there are more people who need home care, and they need it in a timely way. We know that there are young people who are not able to find a job, partly because of a mismatch between labour market and labour force, but also because I think we need to make better connections—labour, government and business. That's the kind of work we're going to be doing as a result of our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People understand very well that these are tough times, and they want to see smart investments that will improve health care, that will create jobs and that will make life more affordable for them. Instead, they see a government that seems much more interested in helping themselves with hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars spent on private power deals that help the Liberal Party, and over a billion dollars on yet more corporate tax loopholes about to open up.

Why won't the Premier put corporate tax loopholes on ice and make the people of this province the priority in this upcoming budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, but let's be clear: There is no new corporate tax loophole that's being opened up. These are, as you know, restricted input tax credits that are—and it's not a billion dollars; I think the rough number is around \$600 million. But, regardless, we are taking steps to close those loopholes. We are taking steps to ensure that we protect the interests of Ontario. That's what we've been saying and that's what we're doing. We look forward to continuing to work together to try to find the best way forward to both support business and encourage investment while, at the same time, ensuring that Ontario has what it takes to balance its books by 2017-18.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When times are tough, you have to make some pretty tough choices. New Democrats don't think this is the time for new, no-strings-attached billion-dollar handouts to corporations so that they don't have to pay the HST. It makes no sense at all.

Instead, we think this is a time to invest in prosperity that everyone can share in, not just a few well-connected insiders. Instead of billions of dollars spent on gas plants or billions of dollars spent on corporate tax loopholes, we think it's time to invest in jobs, health care and making life more affordable for the people who make this province work.

Will the Premier agree that now is not the time for a corporate tax loophole, but rather a time for a balanced approach that puts people first, instead of the Liberal approach that puts insiders first?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, that's what we're saying. We're taking a balanced approach. We're not going to take extreme measures that would hurt our sensitive recovery, a slash-and-burn, across-the-board cut to an Ontario government that's already the lowest-cost-per-capita government anywhere in Canada, but we're also not going to take extreme measures of taxing and over-spending that would also hurt our economic recovery.

We need to be on that balanced approach, on that road to ensuring that we eliminate and tackle our deficit by 2017-18, and that means eliminating these tax loopholes. I've committed to doing that. Our party has said we would. We're taking those measures. We're dealing with the federal government as well, and we're going to encourage that we're all at our best. I hope everybody will work with us as well.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: For the Minister of Finance: Anyone who has ever watched the budget process knows this one is more than just odd. When I asked the minister

for a date last week, he dismissed me and said, "Imminently." Budgets usually come in March, prior to the end of the previous fiscal year; next week, it will be May.

Liberals cannot fathom what the word "balance" even means. The minister's numbers don't add up, but he promises balance by 2017-18. We can only conclude that there's no plan, just a black hole that keeps on expanding and swallowing up Ontario.

Yes, Minister, we'll all know more after your speech at noon, but the Economic Club of Canada is a group of business people who pay to hear you talk. Why won't you just tell all Ontarians right now, for free, how you can control spending without a single piece of legislation aimed at doing that? Ontario's jobs and spending crisis aren't even on your radar. Are you planning on slamming Ontarians with massive tax increases?

1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: I've been waiting, and I've been talking with all members of the opposition, as well as my own caucus. More importantly, I have been consulting with people all across our province. We've touched more people than we've ever done before in preparing a budget that speaks to them.

In our consultations with the member opposite was the delivery of the finance committee's report. I've committed to reviewing that report prior to announcing our budget. I received it just last week at the end of the week. I'm making every commitment possible to work together, and I'm hopeful that you'll read the budget before you announce what you're going to do, because you're already saying you won't even approve it. We have a strong plan, a plan that's balanced, a plan that's going to take us on a path to recovery, a plan that's going to ensure that we balance our books by 2017-18.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, you may soon have a budget, but most people watching you seem to feel much like we do: You have no credible plan. You're in the front benches of a government that has nothing in the cupboard because it tosses taxpayer money down the drain. Imagine how far the billion-plus power plant dollars burned by the McGuinty-Wynne election team would have gone if available now, or the \$300-million-plus and counting that you've handed teachers to cover your missteps of last fall.

Minister, tell us how you plan to balance the budget by 2017-18 as you have promised. What will we call them: new taxes, levies, fees, premiums? Here's the thing, Minister: You cannot just come in here next week, read a speech and expect Ontarians to believe one single thing you say. The record for your non-mandated government speaks for itself. What is being cut? What is increasing?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite just made up a bunch of numbers that are untrue. Unlike the opposition, when they were in power—in fact, they came out with a budget that was untrue: \$5 billion in the hole—we have proven that we can exceed our targets. For four years in a row, we have been able to surpass everything that we said we would do because we're working together with Ontarians. We have attracted more invest-

ment than any other place in Canada, and we'll continue to work with them to ensure that businesses see Ontario as a good place to do business. We will continue to ensure that our public and our people are at their best and working. We have over 400,000 net new jobs since the recessionary lows.

The entire world is having issues with their growth. We recognize that. That's why we're taking measured steps. That's why we're taking restraint measures to ensure that we balance our books by 2017-18. We're moving towards that target. I look forward to having you read the budget—

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

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In 2010, this government made changes to the auto insurance system in Ontario that slashed benefits in Ontario paid out to drivers by 50% and to drivers in the GTA by 70%. Last week in committee hearings, the IBC themselves admitted that these changes resulted in \$2 billion of annual savings for the insurance industry. The IBC themselves admitted it. Yet in the past two years, drivers have seen their own premiums go up by 5%. When will this government pass on a portion of those billions of dollars of savings to drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: You just sort of answered it, didn't you? You just said that the measures we took with the anti-fraud task force to go at the root causes of that fraud to ensure that we're able to lower some of those costs will enable us to have the opportunity to have reduced premiums. We need to do just that.

I agree that premiums are too high. I agree that in Ontario the costs of insurance are 10 times higher than provinces in other parts of Canada. So we need to ensure that we work together to reduce those costs and ultimately reduce our premiums, and that's what we're working towards doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just to correct the Minister of Finance, it's not the anti-fraud task force; it's this government's decision to slash the benefits paid out by insurance companies to drivers in Ontario that resulted in those billions of savings. On April 12, FSCO released its annual report for the first quarter of 2013. No surprise: There's absolutely no cut to the premiums for drivers in Ontario.

In the upcoming budget, this government has a choice. It can either choose to again support the multi-billion dollar insurance industry or it can pass on the billions of dollars of savings to drivers in Ontario. Which will it be?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear. When the NDP were in power, insurance rates went up 27%. When the PCs were in power, they went up 43%. We took power in 2003, and in 2004 we put legislation in place to try to lower those insurance premiums; we are now working with the opposition to try to do the same in 2013. We'll

get there. We'll work with you. The people of Ontario expect us to do just that.

I agree that we need to lower those premiums. We need to work with the industry to make it so. Let's do that together.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the dedicated and experienced Minister of the Environment.

Today, people across the province and around the world will be celebrating Earth Day, an initiative to show public support for environmental protection. This year, it is estimated that Earth Day will take place in more than 190 countries, with over a billion people participating in activities to support our environment.

I know that in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, families will be taking part in events to show their support for tackling climate change.

Speaker, through you, would the minister be able to explain the significance of Earth Day and what the people are doing to participate in this important event?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Today marks the 43rd Earth Day since its civic observance first took place on April 22, 1970. This year, individuals, businesses, schools and organizations across the province will be joining the over one billion people across the globe taking part in their communities to address environmental issues.

Everyone can take part in Earth Day. Just one act symbolizes the difference we can make in addressing climate change. For example, on the weekend, I joined BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association, in Beachway Park, for a shoreline cleanup, where it was great to see so many people pitching in to help in the environmental cleanup.

I was also able to join the many volunteers in Streetsville on Sunday. Along with Credit Valley Conservation and the Sierra Club group, we honoured greenbelt champion Peter Orphanos and planted trees in his memory.

It was encouraging to see people around the province know that their efforts are making a difference in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for providing this House with some examples of the wonderful work people are undertaking to help protect the environment.

The theme for this year's Earth Day is "The Face of Climate Change." The Earth Day Network describes the faces of climate change as those facing the reality of its effects—and there are other faces: the faces that are doing their part to fix the problem, just like the people you participated with over the weekend.

Speaker, through you, would the minister be able to explain what our government is doing to ensure that we are a part of those faces that are working to fix the problem?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, our government is phasing out coal and replacing it, through the Green

Energy Act, with thousands of megawatts of emission-free electricity. Coal-fired electricity generation, with its huge CO₂ emissions, is down by more than 95% since 2003.

We invested \$16 billion in public transit, to address the largest domestic source of smog-causing pollutants in Ontario: motor vehicles.

We're also committed to stopping urban sprawl in the GTA through initiatives such as the greenbelt, which protects nearly two million acres of green space, the equivalent of Prince Edward Island.

The Far North Act protects a land mass of 225,000 square kilometres.

In 2005, we passed the Places to Grow Act to protect our agricultural lands and green spaces from urban sprawl.

By 2020, we will have fulfilled our commitment to plant 50 million trees in southern Ontario.

Just last week, the federal government's National Inventory Report showed that from 2005 to 2011, greenhouse gas emissions in—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, this is a statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I know my job.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, it would appear that everything you've done on this gas plant scandal has been to benefit the Liberal Party. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was done in the interest of any of the taxpayers.

You told us that the cost of Mississauga was \$190 million when the Auditor General told us that you had to know all along the true cost was \$275 million. In fact, most of it was already paid out when you announced that bogus number.

1110

It's clear you can't be trusted with our money. The confidence of your government is at stake here. Premier, will you stand up and give us one good reason to believe anything you ever say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've done exactly what I said I was going to do. I said during the leadership that when I got into office, I would be opening up the process, I would provide opportunity for every single question that was asked to be answered, that we would make sure that every document that was asked for was made available. I started acting on that the day that I came into this office. In fact, we offered to broaden the scope of the committee, and the party opposite did not want to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Renfrew needs to sit in his seat so I can tell him not to talk.

Thank you. Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the scope of the committee is broader, that

every question can be answered, that all documentation can be and has been asked for. That is what I said I would do. That is what I have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let me give you the latest example of your government saying one thing when the complete opposite is true. Last week, your energy minister had the nerve to say, "We were not in a very good bargaining position, mainly because the opposition forced us to show our hand and put all documents on the table, and ... compromised our bargaining position." Premier, your bogus \$40-million Oakville number was announced before any of the documents were ever released. How could he stand and say that?

With the confidence of your government at stake, why do you continue to spread this nonsense? I ask you again, stand up and give us one good reason to ever believe anything you ever say again.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we've been extremely transparent on this issue all the way through. We have a committee that's working—and we have a person who's leading this for the opposition. His brand is a yellow tie, but I think he wants to change his yellow tie for a trench coat and call himself Columbo, because he's trying to parse and split every fact and every answer in committee and make a tremendous scandal out of it.

We've been open, we've been transparent, we've been sharing the information. Most importantly we've accepted the Auditor General's report, and we're encouraging the committee to move forward and be diligent in trying to get better rules for locating energy sites.

ELLIOT LAKE INQUIRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier this morning.

Elliot Lake is still looking for answers into the devastating Algo Mall collapse from last June. The legal counsel for the mall action committee and the Seniors' Action Group of Elliot Lake at the public inquiry is now unable to continue representing these groups because his office has not been paid by the Liberal government since last summer. Even the commissioner himself indicated that this was a concern for the commission counsel and staff.

For a community that has suffered so much, this government-caused delay is utterly unacceptable. Will the Premier commit to removing barriers at the Elliot Lake inquiry so that the voices of the victims are not silenced one minute longer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We know how important the Elliot Lake inquiry is, first of all. That's why it was initiated within a week or so after the tragedy took place.

I've looked into the issue that's been raised with respect to the payment of the lawyers. It's my understanding that the bill was actually submitted sometime near the end of February and it's being looked after today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier: As stated in the order in council, it is the responsibility of the Attorney General's office to reimburse the legal fees of the participants who are granted funding. Yet the government hasn't fulfilled its responsibilities in Elliot Lake for eight months now.

It is shameful that this government's failures have put extra hurdles in the victims' quests to get answers. Will the Premier ensure that these delays do not hurt the families of the victims, as well as the community, who are desperately waiting for answers?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, absolutely. We want to get down to the bottom of this. We want the inquiry to get to the bottom of this. As I indicated before, the first legal bill that was presented to the government was sometime near the end of February. It went through an assessment process as soon as the story came out that the lawyer wasn't being paid. We've looked into it, and it's being looked after today.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, since 2003, our government has built a clean, reliable energy system in Ontario. We have introduced stability into the system, invested in renewable energy to become a leader in North America and created a culture of conservation across Ontario. Those investments have helped us get off of coal-fired generation and ensure that Ontarians have clean air to breathe.

Minister, I know a key part of our energy system has been the long-term plan. Will the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to plan for our future of our energy system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Ottawa—Orléans for the question. We've made real progress in Ontario's energy sector since 2003. The long-term energy plan has been an important part of that progress.

The energy sector is constantly evolving, and that's why a three-year review was part of the plan. That's why I announced last week that we will be conducting a formal review of the long-term energy plan to be completed within six months. Our review will be based on a strong and transparent consultation process with the public, municipalities and the energy sector. Consultation sessions will be held in every region of the province, and we'll engage the aboriginal communities and their leaders. I'm particularly interested in reviewing our supply mix, how conservation can play a larger role and how we can create a predictable and stable clean energy procurement process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As we look to the future of our energy sector, I'm glad to see strong leadership from our government as we look to the best way to evolve. Public consultation is an important part of what we do as a government. I'm glad it will be central to the review.

Minister, you mentioned three key areas for consultation as part of our long-term energy plan review: supply mix, conservation and procurement of clean energy. These are issues that affect the members of my community and families and businesses around the province. Speaker, would the minister expand on those key areas?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you to the member, again. The member is right: There will be three core areas of our review. The first is to receive feedback on Ontario's supply mix, which is one of the greatest strengths of our electricity system right now. We'll ask broad questions about where and how Ontario should produce power in the future.

The second element is conservation. Our government strongly feels that conservation must play a more prominent role. Whether it's through our innovative smart grid or home retrofitting, conservation gives ratepayers power over how much energy they use and how much they pay for it.

Finally, we will create a predictable and sustainable clean energy procurement process. We will provide the right conditions to continue building our green energy industry, including listening to municipalities and recognizing that communities want greater involvement in local energy projects.

We've had great success in our energy system, and I look forward to building on that success.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the member for Don Valley West was the co-chair of the Liberal election campaign in 2011. In that capacity, she was responsible for a decision that she knew would result in the appropriation of millions of tax dollars for the sole purpose of getting the member who sits to her immediate left re-elected. It's also widely known that that same member played a key role in her election as leader of the Liberal Party. Now he's the finance minister, and she's the Premier.

Would the Premier tell us what she plans on doing to repay that campaign debt of \$275 million to the taxpayers of this province?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will just say that I was very clear during my leadership bid that there had been a decision made about the moving of gas plants. There was a cost associated with that. Everyone agreed that those gas plants should move. We have acted on that. What I said was that we were going to make sure that all the questions that were being asked were going to be answered, that all the documentation would be available. We opened up the process, Mr. Speaker. I did exactly what I said I was going to do, and we will continue on that path, making sure the questions get answered. That's why I asked the Auditor General—I asked the Auditor General—to look at the Oakville situation. That is what's happening, and we await his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Auditor General made it very clear that spending \$275 million to move that gas plant was a decision of the Liberal Party of Ontario. The Liberal Party may consider it acceptable to spend \$275 million to save one seat. We don't, and we don't believe the taxpayers of this province do either. We certainly hope that the third party doesn't support that either and won't prop up a government that is so scandal-ridden.

I will repeat my question one more time: Will the Premier stand up—she's already admitted it was a political decision—and tell us how they are going to make it up to the taxpayers of this province? Don't give us a budget that will mean nothing. Call an election and have the people of the province pass judgment on her decisions.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has acknowledged that there was a political aspect to these decisions. Every candidate in the party opposite who was close to this issue in the ridings that they were running in advanced the position of those parties that they would cancel those gas plants. That's what they said. That was their position.

I really believe that Ontarians want to see people in this Legislature working together. We're going to bring a budget forward, and we're taking a balanced approach to that budget.

I hope that both the parties opposite look at that budget and they realize that we are on track, that we are going to balance our budget by 2017-18, that we are being fiscally responsible, and then they will look at the investments that we propose to make sure that we have as fair a society as possible. I hope they will look at that balanced approach. I believe that that is what the people of Ontario want us to be doing as a government, and they want that discussion to happen in this Legislature.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The last couple of days, we have been witnessing some pretty serious flooding in Huntsville, Kawartha Lakes and the Muskokas. We hope and expect that the province will provide residents in those communities with timely assistance.

Flood victims in Thunder Bay are still waiting for help, even though a flood that devastated 700 homes in that community happened almost a year ago. Last week, the Thunder Bay flood victims learned that the government will only provide \$300,000 for private damage claims to houses and small businesses.

When will this government focus more on helping people and less on public relations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just want to comment on the recent flooding we heard about this week. I want to comment and commend the people and the staff and the first

responders in the town of Bracebridge, the town of Huntsville, the town of Bancroft, the city of Kawartha Lakes, the township of Minden Hills, the township of South Algonquin and the municipality of Markstay-Warren. Certainly, they have been under great duress over the last week, and I want to thank them for their hard work and their dedication to their community.

Certainly, Emergency Management Ontario and municipal staff are working on the ground. We have my ministry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and we have the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Transportation all helping on that front and helping the mayors and the individuals to minimize damage. Certainly, we want to offer our assistance.

In the supplementary, obviously, I will get back to the Thunder Bay issue that the member opposite raises.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier herself, Premier Wynne, promised up to \$3.2 million during her tour of the flood-damaged areas of Thunder Bay last year. But instead of the usual \$2 contribution for every dollar raised locally, the flood victims of Thunder Bay are only getting 20 cents on the dollar. This nickel-and-dime is hard to take for people who have already lost so much.

The government can find \$275 million to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. Why can't it pony up \$3 million for the flood victims of Thunder Bay?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: The province committed up to \$17.2 million to Thunder Bay and area municipalities. The ODRAP program has been on the ground since the flood occurred last year. We were there immediately to help, and certainly we're ready to provide more than is actually currently projected.

The city of Thunder Bay asked the province to help cover the cost of their Safe Homes program, and because things are covered under private insurance, some of the items reimbursed from this program were actually not eligible. We're working with the municipality. We understand that when you're in the middle of a crisis, you try and reimburse your community. We're there on the ground, helping. We have made substantial investments. We continue to do that because we want to make sure that this community gets back on its feet as quickly as possible.

I plan to be in Thunder Bay later this week to talk with the mayor and councillors to make sure that we have the receipts we need because, at the end of the day, we have an Auditor General we're responsible to. We have to provide the paperwork, but we want to be there to help that community.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Our government is making record investments in public transit, which will benefit my riding of Scarborough Southwest, where constituents rely on public transit to get to work and to get to school.

I know that reducing congestion is a priority in the GTHA region, and I'm happy that our government is moving forward to address this need. But many of my constituents are looking for more flexibility and convenience when using public transit to get home to their families. They need options if their work demands make them stay late, and they shouldn't have to worry about whether transit will be available when they want to go home.

The government's recent announcement that 30-minute GO train service is coming to the Lakeshore line will address many of these concerns. Could the minister please update the House on this recent announcement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm just wondering if my opposition critics could stand up so we could all figure out who they are, because it's one of the best-kept secrets in the House. I am indebted to members on this side for holding the government accountable on transit and transportation yet again. Maybe we should double the member's pay because he has to be an MPP on the government side and do the opposition's job. The member is quite correct because he does the math before he makes commitments. He actually reads budgets before he votes on them—another uniquely Liberal attribute, Mr. Speaker.

We are introducing half-hour or better GO service all day, and the greatest advantage is, you don't have to fumble with the schedule and figure out whether the train is at 11:17. It will be there when you get to the station. This is the biggest expansion of GO in its history, and we're darned proud to be moving on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thanks to the minister for his excellent answer. GO Transit's new seasonal weekend schedule sounds much improved, and summer travel should be made more convenient than ever. My constituents in Scarborough Southwest will be pleased to hear that our transit investments are making public transit a better choice for commuters. This will reduce congestion on our roads and improve quality of life for Ontario families.

But it's strange to me that this service will stop short of Hamilton. It seems like a natural fit for residents there, and I know that people in Hamilton and Scarborough Southwest will be wondering why the service stops before it reaches them.

Can the minister explain why this 30-minute, all-day, two-way GO service will not be extended to Hamilton?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I kind of love Hamilton. It's one of my favourite cities in the country.

The challenge we have is that the tracks from Aldershot to Hamilton are not owned by us. They're owned by CN and CP, and we continue to negotiate with them.

But I'm happy to report that is not stopping us from improving service to Hamilton. As a matter of fact, we are building a new GO station in Hamilton, supporting the great work of LIUNA. Hamilton will now have two GO stations. Two more trips will be added in the morning and the afternoon, starting in 2015 as one of the leg-

acies of those amazing Pan Am Games. We continue to spend hundreds of millions and billions of dollars in improving track capacity.

But I would suggest that when the opposition was in power and froze funding for GO, had they not done that, we'd already be in Hamilton.

1130

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Premier this morning. As the chair of the cabinet meeting where the cost of the Oakville cancellation was discussed, it's clear that you know the cost of cancelling the gas plant. Yet whenever you're asked about the cost of cancelling the gas plant on the floor of the House here, you bring up your offer to appear before committee.

Premier, surely we shouldn't have to haul you before committee like some Quebec construction industry snitch just to get an answer to a question. How long do you really expect the Liberal farm team to my left to prop you up and prop up your scandal-plagued government when you can't even answer a simple question?

This is question period. I'm expecting an answer. I would hope to get an answer from you. If you can give an answer at committee down the road somewhere, then you can tell us right now: How much will it cost to cancel—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to read one paragraph from the memorandum of understanding with respect to the costs, and I would like to challenge the member who asked the question to tell me what it means:

"[T]he OPA shall pay to TCE the positive difference, if any, between (i) the aggregate amount of costs confirmed by the opinion of an independent auditor to have been paid by TCE in respect of costs contemplated by sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B and (ii) the amount paid by the OPA to TCE in accordance with the provisions of sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B; or TCE shall pay to the OPE the positive difference, if any, between (i) the amount paid by the OPA to TCE in accordance with the provisions of sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B, and (ii) the aggregate amount of costs confirmed by the opinion of an independent auditor to have been paid by TCE in respect of costs contemplated by sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B;"

That's why we have the Auditor General looking into the costs and that's why we'll accept his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The fake transparency continues.

I'd like to ask the member a question. Maybe he should ask Bob Delaney how much \$1.3 billion would go—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, on September 24, 2012, an agreement was signed between the province of Ontario, TransCanada and the OPA which set out the

details of the cost of the Oakville plant. They were put on the website. There's also a 216-page contract signed by the parties that's on the website. We now have the Ontario Power Authority and the Auditor General looking into verifying the costs in a report that will be provided by the Auditor General of Ontario.

We are awaiting the report of the Auditor General to deal with those difficult clauses in trying to calculate the cost.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last month, St. Joseph's Health Care centre announced the closure of the hydrotherapy pool. This pool regularly serves 300 residents, many of whom face significant health challenges and issues.

I have dozens of letters from seniors like Ms. Hilda Petch who are devastated by the closure. Ms. Petch wrote, "Ten years ago I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, and I looked for something that would help me ... and the pool has been the answer for me."

My question is simple: Is the minister going to allow the hydrotherapy pool to close or will she intervene?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Of course, I have also heard from people who would like to see the pool remain open. What I can say is that hospitals across the province, including St. Joe's in London, are looking very closely at their budgets. They must continue to provide that important service that can be delivered only in hospitals. If there are services they are providing that can be delivered in the community, then that is the appropriate thing to do.

I know that St. Joe's hospital has determined that there are facilities outside of the hospital that can provide this important care for people. I look forward to the supplementary and I could talk about some of the reforms we're making on physiotherapy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The community pools don't meet the needs of these patients because the hydrotherapy pools are designed for medical reasons, to help them for rehab. The hospital is looking for \$6.3 million in savings and they feel as though they can't justify the \$25,000 expense of hydrotherapy, but this closure is nothing short of penny-wise and pound foolish. The future cost of caring for 300 residents who will lose their main source of rehab and therapy will undoubtedly be more expensive than the cost of keeping these people healthy. A solution needs to be found. Will the minister take the steps necessary to ensure that the community continues to have access to this vital service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, it's very important to me that the people who take advantage of that pool now do have access to other places in the community that can provide that kind of physio, that kind of health—last week, I was very pleased to announce that we are almost doubling the number of people in this

province, most of them seniors, who will have access to one-on-one physiotherapy and exercise programs and falls prevention programs. By changing the way we deliver those services, we're going to be able to significantly expand access, including in communities that do not currently have access to those physiotherapy clinics. This is advice that we've received from Dr. Samir Sinha, from Dr. David Walker and, indeed, from Dr. Don Drummond.

We've also got the support of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association and seniors and their advocates right across the province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, l'honorable Brad Duguid.

Recently, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities released the new tuition framework for post-secondary education. I know first-hand from encountering families and students in my riding of Etobicoke North that there's a sense of gratitude and anticipation about our government's steps to make post-secondary education more affordable.

To finance their education, many students in Etobicoke North have part-time and summer jobs. Studying at the post-secondary level and financing a degree or a diploma can be a significant concern and undertaking. The reduction in tuition caps has significantly helped students in my riding, but many students and families worry that this initiative won't be enough.

Speaker, through you, I ask the minister, on behalf of students in Etobicoke North and beyond: Will the minister please inform the House what other programs, initiatives and directives will allow students in our province to access our world-class post-secondary system?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know that the member has been speaking to students in his riding just by virtue of the issues he brings forward in the question. I think it's safe to say that students would have liked to have seen us go even further, but they understand that we're trying to balance quality with affordability. Frankly, we're not willing to compromise on either. This measure will save the average undergrad student in university about \$1,200 over the course of this tuition framework, which is really important.

Despite the tough fiscal times that we've been going through, our government has implemented the 30%-off tuition grant that goes to low- and middle-income students. In all, 230,000 low- and middle-income students are benefitting from that grant this year. That's making our post-secondary education system more affordable and more accessible, and reducing the burden of student debt.

VISITORS

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much. I beg the indulgence of the House. I want to introduce my

constituent Janet MacDougall and her daughter Marnie, who are here with us today.

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

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm proud to welcome the extraordinary recipients of the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. We are joined here today in the members' gallery by Janelle Brady, Mariah Bunz, Alex Escobar, Tyson Grinsell, Mohsin Khan, Josie Linton, Jean-Phillippe Vinette, Haleigh Wiggins and Stephanie Zhou.

We also have members of the advisory council in attendance. Please join me in welcoming Robert Bennett, Shaun Chen, Nancy Averill, Alexis Smith and Rashad Saad. Welcome very much. Welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and congratulations.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome two people from the Trillium Gift of Life Network who are making their way in: Ronnie Gavsie and Versha Prakash. I think we will be speaking about organ and tissue donation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce two guests this afternoon. I'm pleased to have His Worship Mayor Terry Clayton of the township of Brock and regional councillor Debbie Bath, also of Brock township, who are here today to attend the awarding of an Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers to one of our constituents, Josie Linton.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO GREEN SPACE

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure to recognize that today is Earth Day and speak about the benefits of having sustainable green space in Toronto and indeed across this province.

I've been informed by many in the University of Toronto community that important green space is about to be permanently removed. This June, there are plans to dig up a significant part of the natural heritage landscape of U of T's campus to replace it with synthetic Astroturf for the use of field hockey in the 2015 Pan Am Games.

Green space is an important and valuable part of our environment. It helps contribute to healthy living by providing space for the community to enjoy the outdoors. Preserving these spaces helps keep a clean earth for future generations.

Though a venue for field hockey is an important aspect of the Pan Am Games, I sincerely hope the minister has weighed the importance of green space for the community against possible alternative venues.

I'd like to recognize the University of Toronto Keep Back Campus Green movement for raising awareness on this issue. They've collected close to 5,000 signatures in

support of saving this green space, and their commitment to the environment should be applauded.

I hope that the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games responds to this group and gives consideration to their concerns.

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: More and more, we're getting complaints from constituents across my riding, and I imagine it's the same in Algoma-Manitoulin as it is in Sudbury and other communities, where people who have been truck drivers—commercial truck drivers—for many and many a year are now being refused access into the United States when driving into the States because of Ontario's driver's card.

The issue is that the American government has a rule that doesn't allow particular people to drive commercial vehicles in the event that they have certain medical conditions. That is not the case in Ontario. For example, a person who has diabetes, or a person who has a disease that we're able to treat, is allowed to drive commercial vehicles in Ontario.

Ontario is now putting a code on the driver's licence that makes it, when the commercial driver drives into the United States, that that person is refused entry because the code says they have a medical condition. They're unable to cross the border. Clearly this is an oversight, I would hope, on the part of the Ministry of Transportation in doing this, or it's part of the Homeland Security issue, in which case, either way, this is not on. We have our rules here in the United States because of something we're doing is wrong. If United States has rules, it's up to them to figure out which of our drivers are classed in any way. It shouldn't be up to us to divulge that information freely and openly to the United States and their customs.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am honoured today to rise in the House to give recognition to St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church of the village of Weston, which this year celebrates the 160th anniversary of the church as a community of faith and the 100th anniversary of its recognition as a parish within the archdiocese of Toronto.

The church was honoured to celebrate its anniversaries on Sunday, April 14, 2013, with His Excellency Bishop John A. Boissonneau, auxiliary bishop of Toronto.

A hundred and sixty years ago the Catholic community in Weston came together to establish a church so they could worship together. The community of St. John the Evangelist has grown through many difficult and exciting decades, always being an important part of the community of York South-Weston.

The church is, Mr. Speaker, the little parish with heart in the big city, and I wish to extend my most heartfelt congratulations to the church, pastor Father Michael McGourty, laypersons and staff, and to all its parish-

ioners for 160 years of playing a vital, vibrant, central role in the community. This community will soon also be looking forward to having a new school built next to it, a brand new elementary school that bears the name of St. John the Evangelist Catholic School.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, last November the PC Party laid out a bold new plan to protect consumers, preserve our environment and create good-paying jobs in the recycling sector. The plan starts with ending the eco tax schemes that Liberals created in 2008 and in 2009 so that government can be returned to its role as a regulator.

The PC Party would improve our environment and kick-start economic growth in the recycling sector by setting measurable and achievable waste diversion targets, establishing environmental standards and monitoring those outcomes. We'd apply this approach to much more than the Liberals' fixation on less than 5% of Ontario's annual waste accounted for in their three costly eco tax programs. All three of these programs—for electronics, tires and household hazardous materials—have failed to make waste diversion the cost of doing business, because the Liberals continue to approve new eco-tax schemes that allow companies to pass those costs on to consumers at the cash register.

Now we've heard the environment minister say that none of this money goes to the government. Well, that's simply not true. In fact, over the last four years the Liberals have allowed its recycling agencies to embed \$10 million a year in hidden HST charges into eco taxes. To add insult to injury, those eco taxes are then subject to HST again. That means every time Ontarians purchase an item that has an eco tax, they're paying a tax on a tax on a tax. If anyone wants to know why the Liberals will stop at nothing to prop up their failing eco tax programs, simply follow the money.

NORTHERN ONTARIO AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, you're going to enjoy this. I know you like fish, so let's talk about Algoma-Manitoulin fishing.

For the past two weeks in the Ontario Legislature, we have been talking about the importance of local food. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a group in my riding that is working to provide sustainable, healthy, local food to Ontarians. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association represents the environmentally sustainable cage culture and land-based agri-food fish farming industry primarily based here in Ontario.

As part of the northern growth plan, the government identified aquaculture as a promising sector. The Ontario aquaculture sector contributes to local economies while producing safe, quality foods for many Ontarians to enjoy. The northern aquaculture industry is a source of sustainable economic development and employs innova-

tive research and practices. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association works with aquaculture operators to ensure ongoing research on issues pertaining specifically to the industry, working to promote and enhance aquaculture in Ontario.

Local cage culture operations in Lake Huron produce over nine million pounds of rainbow trout annually, with the deep cold water of the lake providing an ideal environment for raising the fish.

Aquaculture and related activities contribute more than \$50 million annually to the Ontario economy, supporting over 200 jobs.

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Farmed fish is naturally low in sodium and is an excellent source of protein, allowing Ontarians better access to healthy foods.

While we continue to discuss the importance of local foods, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a group in Algoma-Manitoulin who are providing locally fresh, healthy options to the community and Ontarians.

BAHA'I COMMUNITY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I stand in this House, joined by my colleague Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill, to wish the people of the Baha'i faith a joyful Ridvan.

Ridvan is a 12-day religious festival, and is one of the most important celebrations in the Baha'i faith. Often referred to as "the king of festivals," it takes its name from the Garden of Ridvan, located near Baghdad, Iraq. The site is historically significant, as it is a location where Baha'u'llah, the faith's founder, spent 12 days prior to his religious journey to Istanbul before declaring that he was a divine messenger in 1863.

Beginning at sunset on April 20, until sunset May 2, followers of the Baha'i faith honour the 12 days that Baha'u'llah spent in the Garden of Ridvan by celebrating spring and a renewal of spirituality.

There are approximately 12,000 individuals who practise the Baha'i faith living in Ontario, and more than five million followers globally. This includes the great ridings of Oak Ridges-Markham and Richmond Hill, which are home to a number of families practising the Baha'i faith and celebrating the festival of Ridvan.

I would like to wish everyone celebrating this 12-day religious festival a happy Ridvan.

MILTON LEGION CRIBBAGE TEAM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to congratulate four legionnaires from the great riding of Halton. Ken Johnson, Gloria Murray, and Phyllis and Carson Smith from the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 136, Milton, were recently crowned Ontario Legion cribbage champions.

Legion sports are an important part of the Legion activities, offering members the opportunity to compete against each other and other branches in a wide variety of

sports and gaming events. Some of the activities include darts, euchre, cribbage, pool, curling, golf, track and field, and many more. Legion sports are separated into two categories, one being for adults and the other for youth under 17. Legion members can show their talents by competing and advancing from the branch level to zone level to provincial, and even the national dominion level, where competition is of an expert calibre.

For the Milton Legion cribbage team, travelling to Liverpool, Nova Scotia on Friday to take on other provincial championship teams from across the country will be no small task. I have complete confidence in our Milton team to bring back first place to Branch 136.

I would ask all members of the House to join with me in wishing the Milton Legion cribbage team all the best as they compete for gold at the Dominion cribbage championship.

Good luck to Ken, Gloria, Phyllis and Carson. I know that you will do us proud in Nova Scotia. I also know that you'll have a pretty good time, and after all, that's what it's all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dare I—15-4 and there ain't no more.

The member for Oakville.

OAKVILLE AWARDS FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and tell you that I had the opportunity recently to attend the 18th annual Oakville Awards for Business Excellence, hosted by the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. The awards are dedicated to recognizing models of excellence and community service by Oakville's businesses.

I'd like to congratulate SOS First Aid for winning small business of the year and Astound Group Inc. for winning the large business category. Other winners include Cucci Ristorante for best restaurant; Oakville Endoscopy Centre for best professional services provider; and Dufferin Construction for best community builder.

I'd also like to congratulate Tal Dehtiar from Oliberté Limited for receiving the young entrepreneur of the year award, as well as Michelle Eglington from Euro-Line Appliances for being named the best employee.

On the eve of hosting the Canadian Open, Glen Abbey golf course was named best hospitality and visitor attraction, and Ford was named Oakville's business icon.

I'd like to applaud the chamber for hosting another great event, for raising funds that go to numerous youth and academic programs, and I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who were nominated and all those who won that evening.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Happy Earth Day, Speaker.

I wanted to let everyone know that I will be introducing a private member's bill this afternoon entitled the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. I chose Earth Day to introduce my PMB because at its heart, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act is about helping to address the need for aggregates while at the same time preserving the finite supply of land from which we extract.

Currently across Ontario, there are dozens of public sector bodies like the Ministry of Transportation and select municipalities that are doing a great job incorporating recycled aggregates into their construction work, but we can do more. There are still too many cases where bids to complete public sector construction work are restricted to using only 100% virgin or primary aggregates, thereby excluding recycled materials from being considered.

Recycled aggregates have proven to be as safe and reliable as primary aggregates. No one should be prevented from competing for a contract solely because they propose to use recycled aggregates.

If an Ontario business wants to make a bid to build or resurface a road, then they should be able to include recycled aggregates in their proposal. That is not something we should be stopping; that is something we should be promoting.

During the review of the Aggregate Resources Act last year, we heard from countless presenters that more recycled aggregate should be used in Ontario. Today I say to my fellow members: Let's get it done, let's show some leadership and let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

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

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Prince Edward-Hastings has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cost of the Oakville gas plant cancellation. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Nipissing has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the cost of the Oakville gas plant cancellation. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Newmarket-Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —the Attorney General will not only sit in his seat, if he wants to heckle, and then when he sits in his seat, I'll tell him to stop heckling—concerning her role in the authorizing of the closure of the Mississauga gas plant. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AGGREGATE RECYCLING PROMOTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROMOTION DU RECYCLAGE DES AGRÉGATS

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work / Projet de loi 56, Loi interdisant certaines restrictions frappant l'utilisation d'agrégats lors de la réalisation de travaux de construction pour le secteur public.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: From the preamble: Ontario residents expect the government of Ontario to take a leadership role in balancing the relationship between primary aggregate extraction and secondary aggregate recycling, the latter of which contributes to preserving the environment.

Ontario residents expect the government of Ontario and the broader public sector, including government-funded institutions, to conduct business in a sustainable way that is both operationally and economically viable.

Ontario residents also expect that, where appropriate, recycled aggregates will be fairly considered in all construction contracts entered into by the government of Ontario and the broader public sector. This allows for a better balance between the need for primary aggregate extraction and secondary aggregate recycling in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April 21 to 28 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. It's a time when we take the opportunity to help increase awareness of organ and tissue donation registration so we can help save more lives.

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I am delighted to be joined today by Ronnie Gavsie and Versha Prakash from the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They devote their lives to helping those who need transplants get those transplants.

It is not an overstatement to say that organ donation is a matter of life or death. A single donor can save the life of up to eight people and, through tissue donation, enhance the lives of 75 others. I'm delighted to say that in the last fiscal year, there were a record-breaking 1,009

live-saving transplants performed in Ontario, and over 1,600 tissue donors helped thousands to live healthier lives.

Yes, the numbers are slowly going up, but we have so much more work to do. The fact is, only 22% of Ontarians are registered as organ and tissue donors. We know from research that as many as one in five people mistakenly believe that they have registered consent. The old paper card that people have been carrying around in their wallets does not mean they are registered. Speaker, I'm encouraging all Ontarians to take a couple of minutes from their day and register online at beadonor.ca or in person at ServiceOntario.

Our government is helping to make it as easy as possible to register. I'm pleased to say that since February of this year, after a successful pilot, ServiceOntario is now asking all Ontarians who renew their driver's licence or obtain an Ontario photo card to register their consent to donate. This is in addition to the practice already established to ask the same of those obtaining or renewing their Ontario health card.

I'm asking MPPs and anyone watching at home to take out your health card. I know it's there. It's in your wallet; it's in your purse. Mine says "donor" on the back. If yours doesn't, I hope you're going to take the next step and register, because we all need to lead by example.

Ontario still faces an urgent challenge. The list of people waiting for a life-saving or -transforming transplant is too long. One person dies on that list every three days. Ontario's world-class hospitals have the skills, they have the knowledge, to perform medical miracles, but the people on the transplant wait-list need more of us to register our consent to become organ and tissue donors.

I've had the opportunity to see the impact of organ donation first-hand. I've met a number of organ and tissue recipients. It strikes me that they would not still be living if it were not for the generosity of a complete stranger. I've registered my consent to be an organ donor. I can tell you, it's a good feeling, knowing that even after I'm gone, I could still make a positive difference for my fellow Ontario citizens.

Over the years, we've been working with the Trillium Gift of Life Network on a number of initiatives to raise awareness and encourage more donations. Last year marked the start of a campaign that has been showing great promise. The Trillium Gift of Life Network launched the Gift of 8 movement, which refers to the fact that one donor can save up to eight lives. It's a platform that uses social media to raise more awareness by getting the word out about organ donation.

The Gift of 8 movement website has a couple of pretty neat features. First, it provides local communities across Ontario an electronic display of their donor registration data. You can learn how your community compares to others across the province, and I'd like to give a shout-out to the top communities in the province right now for their organ donor registration.

At the top of the list are the communities of Garson, Hanmer, Lively and Val Caron. All of those are

represented by the member from Nickel Belt. They've got a registration rate of 49% to 50%. Next is Parry Sound, represented by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, at 49%; and North Bay, represented by the member for Nipissing, at 47%. The member from Sudbury can take pride in his community, at 45%.

There are many communities that could do way better, and it wouldn't hurt to have a little more competition. That's why, and more importantly, the Gift of 8 movement allows individuals and organizations to create customized web pages on beadonor.ca and run their own registration campaigns through their digital and real-world networks.

Last year, I personally mounted a registration campaign on the site, and I'm challenging all MPPs to work with their constituents and start their own registration campaigns. I'm setting a new goal of registering 1,500 people to do my part to ensure that Gift of 8 becomes a movement rather than merely an initiative. This is the kind of personal involvement we need to truly mobilize Ontarians and get this conversation into the open. Organ and tissue donation is also a testament to the power of individuals and networks to make a world of difference.

You've doubtless heard of Helene Campbell, the remarkable young woman from Ottawa who last year underwent a double lung transplant in Toronto. She raised her awareness about organ donation through her tweets to high-profile celebrities. As a direct result of her efforts there was a remarkable uptick in the number of people who signed their organ donation consent form.

So let's keep that momentum going. By working hard together, by encouraging people to register their consent to donate and by sharing their wishes with their families, we can all help save lives. Ontarians are caring people. I know we can do this. I have every confidence that together we will increase those registration rates so that fewer people will have to wait to receive the transplants they need.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize National Volunteer Week. Every year during this special week we take a moment to say thank you to the more than six million volunteers who work hard to make a difference in our province. National Volunteer Week is our chance to celebrate their compassion, generosity and hard work. It's a time to honour their commitment to service.

Day in and day out, volunteers of all ages give their valuable time to make our communities stronger. They change our world as mentors, caregivers, fundraisers and board members.

Volunteering is a valued tradition in this province. It's my privilege, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to recognize our exceptional volunteers across the province and to say thank you.

Ontario's selfless volunteers make a difference. This year, close to 10,000 volunteers of all ages who are

making a difference are being recognized with Volunteer Service Awards. Since their inception, more than 170,000 Ontarians have proudly received Volunteer Service Awards. We're very proud of them.

During National Volunteer Week we also present the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism, recognizing individuals, businesses and other organizations for their outstanding volunteer contributions. Our youth are our future, and that's why young people are being recognized for their outstanding community service with the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

This National Volunteer Week, we also are launching our sixth annual ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. Since 2008, more than 63,000 students have participated, volunteering hundreds of thousands of hours in their communities. This year we're aiming to engage more than 30,000 youth.

And that's not all. Through the partnership project, Ontario is taking concrete steps to support our strong tradition of volunteerism and to find new ways to work together for the not-for-profit sector. Volunteerism is a win-win for everyone. It helps students develop skills that can get them jobs in the future, it helps communities deliver services to the less fortunate and it helps Ontario newcomers make connections so they can acquire valuable Canadian work experience. Finally, and most importantly, volunteerism helps to make Ontario one of the best places to live on the planet.

I urge the members of the Legislature to recognize their community volunteers this week and during the Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies that are taking place in the upcoming weeks.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Bill Walker: At moments of profound need we count on each other for compassion, kindness and generosity. This week we recognize all people whose compassion and giving spirit saved another's life. National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week is a time when we reflect on their noble acts and recognize the indelible mark they have left on the lives of countless Ontarians.

Sadly, however, the need for organ and tissue donors continues to be greater than ever before. Today, more than 1,500 Ontarians await an organ transplant. While many individuals will receive life-saving treatment, too many will pass before help arise. All of us can play a part in ending this loss of life, because it is preventable. I encourage all of us to consider becoming a donor.

People often become apprehensive when thinking about donating their organs after death. Thinking about our own mortality is uneasy, and it is difficult to plan for such an event. However, by choosing to be a donor now people can rest assured knowing that they are making the ultimate sacrifice, saving the lives of people who would not otherwise survive.

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Consider this: One organ donor can save the lives of nine transplant recipients, one tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 50 people and one cornea donor can bring sight to two people. So, as 1,500 Ontarians continue to wait for an organ transplant in Ontario, we in the PC Party call upon everyone—all health care professionals, educators, government agencies, volunteers, community groups and private organizations—to join forces to boost the number of organ and tissue donors throughout the province.

My colleague the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West, Rob Milligan, brought this campaign to boost organ donations to the floor of this Legislature when he introduced the Organ or Tissue Donation Statute Law Amendment Act this time last year. Likewise, leaders in education, such as the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, have kicked off their own campaign, aimed at raising staff and student awareness about the value of organ donation under the slogan, “Don’t Take your Organs to Heaven. Heaven Knows We Need Them Here.”

I commend everyone who is doing his or her part in helping to save a life. Kindness, compassion and a giving spirit are the pillars that shape Ontario’s character. So, let’s commit to sticking to them by ensuring that every individual has access to the care and services they need. You can register now at beadonor.ca.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It’s an honour to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus to respond to the minister’s statement on National Volunteer Week.

It’s a time to recognize and celebrate the incredible efforts of our volunteers. As the minister said, six million Ontarians volunteer in our province each year. In Ontario, our incredible volunteers contribute more than 860 million volunteer hours every year.

Volunteers are an important part of a healthy community. This is why I was proud to support our volunteers with my private member’s bill, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, which would make it easier to volunteer with multiple organizations across Ontario.

In my own riding of Dufferin–Caledon, we have an excellent spirit of volunteerism, and I want to mention two organizations specifically for all the hard work they do helping people find fulfilling volunteer opportunities. One is Volunteer MBC, or Mississauga Brampton Caledon, which does great work referring potential volunteers with placements in our community. MBC serves all ages, including youth, seniors, newcomers and groups, and provides education and support for volunteers and community service agencies.

Another great organization is Volunteer Dufferin which, like Volunteer MBC, specializes in matching people with organizations to volunteer. An online matching site, Volunteer Dufferin is part of a larger initiative to strengthen the volunteer base in Dufferin county.

National Volunteer Week is the perfect time to thank volunteers for all they do for us and in our communities. So to all our volunteers: Thank you. We cannot say enough, and appreciate your dedication and hard work.

Speaker, I must mention that this weekend you might have noticed it was a bit snowy, a bit cold and a bit rainy. On Saturday morning, there were literally hundreds of volunteers who participated in a Make Orangeville Shine program. They were out there in the snow flurries and the wind, picking up garbage to make our community better and improve it for everyone. I really have to give them a shout-out, because I’m sure it wasn’t a very pleasant Saturday morning. But they came away with a glow and an opportunity to do something special for the community. Congratulations.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few comments to what was already said about National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, which we are already in.

Last year, I used most of my time to brag about what Hélène Campbell had been doing with her tweets and with increasing the number of people who sign up to be a donor. I also want to highlight Mr. George Marcello, with Torch of Life, who has also brought a significant increase in the number of people who know about organ donation and know how to sign up and be a donor.

This year, I want to focus a little bit on somebody all of you know well. His name is Peter Kormos. Peter Kormos was the member from Welland, and he spent a great deal of his time here at Queen’s Park supporting what is called presumed consent. Presumed consent is another step that jurisdictions have taken; Ontario is not one of them. But he wanted Ontario to become a jurisdiction where presumed consent would become the law of the land, where basically we make it easy for everybody to be a donor. Like the minister has said and the critic has said, people in Ontario are good people. We want to help one another. We want to live by the motto of, “Don’t Take Your Organs to Heaven. Heaven Knows We Need Them Here.” That makes it even easier.

Peter had done a ton of research on the subject to look at: What are those jurisdictions who have presumed consent, and what kind of differences do we see? I have more or less taken the torch from my good friend and will try to continue pushing this concept.

There were also other pieces in there. When a child reaches 16—when a young person, really, has to go for their own health card and renew their health card, it would be a good time to add in the curriculum the fact that by signing your card, one donor can help eight lives—to do that education. For a lot of families, it is hard to talk about death, and a lot of organ donation happens during that really, really busy period when somebody passes. So make it a little bit easier by having the school curriculum talk to young people, at about age 16, about this.

I have to leave some time on the clock for my colleague, but I want to say, from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, all best wishes to Kim Cloutier. Kim Cloutier is from Elliot Lake. She’s recovering from a double lung transplant right now. Our best prayers go to you.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s my honour and privilege to rise to recognize the phenomenal work done by our tens of thousands of volunteers. One in particular, Janelle Brady, from Parkdale–High Park, is receiving a medal from the Lieutenant Governor, probably as we speak, so a shout-out to her as well—but also to recognize the work that’s done, just to add to what has been said, by the incredible number of faith community volunteers: from our synagogues, mosques, temples and churches. People pour out their hearts and their souls and their efforts to help the marginalized, and they do this year in and year out, without a great deal of recompense—certainly no money.

Our volunteers contribute about \$45 billion into our economy every year in this province. It’s an incalculable sum. We literally couldn’t run the province without them. Without our volunteers, this province would simply grind to a halt. That’s the reality.

Here’s something we could really do for our volunteers, and that is—increasingly, they’re becoming exhausted. The Out of the Cold program has a hard time recruiting, because folks simply can’t keep up with the demands of the marginalized.

What we could really do, if we really respected and loved our volunteers as we should, is to have government step up and do what government should be doing. It’s government’s responsibility to look after the marginalized and the vulnerable. We should not leave this to the volunteers. This is our responsibility, collectively. So let’s help our volunteers. Let’s not leave what should be government’s responsibility to the good people in our faith communities and in our institutions.

Let’s provide real jobs with real pay, real benefits and real pensions, and let’s step up and do what we should be doing—hopefully, in the budget.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encour-

aging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this, will affix my name and send it with page Jason.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: The petition is presented by members from Kagawong—again from Manitoulin Island—Gore Bay and Mindemoya.

“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;

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“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 will present it to page Glory.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Good Things Grow in Ontario.

“Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and will send it up with Nicholas.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

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

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Pat Drysdale and other constituents in the riding of Durham, and present it to Bonnie, one of the pages.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

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

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

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

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Grant Crack: A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Good Things Grow in Ontario.

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, and I sign it and give it to page Jarrod.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the” McGuinty-Wynne “government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I agree with this and I will be signing it.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

A thousand dogs have already died this year just because of the way they look. I certainly agree and am going to sign this and give it to Madeline to be delivered to the table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

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

“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

“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, with its northern Scarborough neighbours;

“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 this petition, and I’ll give it to Annie.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) previously covered one Papanicolaou (Pap) test a year for women in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 390 died from the disease in 2012, and that this valuable test is a simple screening procedure that can help prevent cancer of the cervix; and

“Whereas the province through OHIP now only covers the cost of a test once every three years under new rules that took effect January 1; and

“Whereas women who want an annual Pap test now have to pay for the screening themselves under the new rules;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the OHIP funding for annual Pap tests for women in order to help prevent cervix cancer and ensure women’s overall health and well-being.”

1350

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions I’ve received to do with the trades tax: “Stop the Trades Tax” petition. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I support this petition, Mr. Speaker.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the WSIB has mandated that, effective January 1, 2013, all independent contractors and small business owners operating in the construction industry must have WSIB coverage;

“Whereas many of these business owners have their own private workplace insurance that in most cases is more affordable, more efficient and provides ... extensive coverage;

“Whereas mandatory WSIB premiums add significant costs to small businesses and adversely affect their growth prospects and in some cases their solvency;

“Whereas the government provided minimum notice about the change to businesses, with WSIB sending out an official letter dated November 25, 2012;

“Whereas, at a time when Ontario is facing a jobs crisis with 600,000 people unemployed, the government and its agencies should not be discouraging private sector job creation and growth by levying additional, unnecessary costs;

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

“To direct the Minister of Labour to issue an order in council eliminating the requirement that mandates compulsory WSIB coverage on all independent contractors and small business owners in the construction industry.”

I agree with this petition and I sign my name to it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm presenting a petition on behalf of the residents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and...

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘fails,’ which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers...;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I'll affix my name.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Signatures keep coming in, Speaker, from farm dealerships—all the farm dealerships, now—in my riding.

“Stop the Tire Tax Hikes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for farm and construction tires;

“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 Ontario's opposition has proposed a plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling;

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

“Suspend the hikes to Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on farm and off-the-road tires pending proposals to lower costs.”

I sign my name to these petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm so happy that I have an opportunity to finish speaking to this bill. Agriculture is very important to many of the communities and many in Algoma-Manitoulin.

When we first saw this bill in 2012, Local Food Week was designated to be the week after the long weekend. When this plan was created, there was obviously no consultation with farmers, and no foresight by the ministry, as this week coincides with farmers planting their crops. Anyone with any knowledge of farming would have enough foresight to know that this would mean we could not have ensured an abundance of local food, which the week intends to celebrate.

For the government's second kick at the can, the ministry had time to think about these implications but still picked a week that is not ideal. The government would like to make Local Food Week the same week as Agriculture Week. This just goes to show how out of touch this government is. The government had the opportunity to show rural and northern Ontario that they are listening to their needs. Why don't Local Food Week and Agriculture Week deserve their separate weeks? I would think that if the government is serious about making local food a priority, a separate week would have been chosen.

To even think that local food is the only issue that farmers care about is misguided and uninformed. There are many other concerns farmers have that do not include local foods. Just to name a few of these concerns, to remind the government they exist, how about cumbersome legislation; food processing standards; funding for crop risk management; and the increasing price of eco fees on farming equipment?

This bill then goes on to stipulate that the ministry publish, at least every three years, a summary of provincial local food initiatives, and highlight successes and innovations in the broader public sector and elsewhere. It makes sense for the ministry to publish a summary of provincial local food initiatives and highlight success stories, but there is no reason why this report should only come out once every three years.

The report must include ministerial and public institution achievements in the increase in local food awareness. We need safeguards in place to ensure that it includes a fair and honest assessment of how the ministry is succeeding or failing in attempts to increase the utilization of local food in Ontario.

This bill needs to go much further, not only for the sake of local farmers but also to give our communities what they deserve. I am not the only voice who feels this way about this bill. Even the leaders in the academic world have spoken out about this bill. University of Guelph Professor Evan Fraser told the CBC on March 26 that the Local Food Act "is a foundational stone that will be made more concrete in subsequent years, but right now it sounds pretty aspirational." Professor Fraser acknowledges that this legislation is a stepping stone, but even he can tell that this bill does not set out to achieve

real results. It just aspires to do that one day, if and when the government feels like it.

Or should the government always aspire to make suitable legislation on the first try? This should be about quality, not about putting something through with a nice-sounding title, with no meat on the bones.

This government needs to show real commitment to farming. After all, Ontario is home to Canada's largest food processing sector. It's time we give this sector the attention it rightfully deserves. The Ontario agri-food sector contributes more than \$34 billion to the economy and employs more than 700,000 people. This sector stands to grow if it gets the proper supports.

It's time to create real initiatives to buy local. The act requires Ontario ministries to buy local food, but does not include quotas or legislated requirements for the amount of local food sold or bought by retailers or institutions, such as schools and hospitals. Quotas should not be avoided. They are real, tangible numbers that provide security to the industry.

The number of farmers across Ontario is falling. If we are going to have a sustainable local food production industry, we need to do more to make farming a viable and attractive career option for young people. We need to do something about the falling numbers of farmers, in order to address the problem of food security.

When people buy local, it helps local economies. This is a simple step to ensuring that local and small-scale farmers stay in business and help the local economy, while improving food security in our province. All of these factors working together are important pieces of the puzzle.

1400

Many farmers have been forced out of all forms of markets, which affects access to a diverse selection of local foods. When a local agriculture economy suffers, farmers turn to cash crops such as corn and soya beans, which have had bad consequences in rural communities as they lose access to locally grown produce.

The government should make it easier for young people to pursue careers in farming, and be looking at creating a new apprenticeship program for young people to develop skills they need for a successful farming career. They should also be working with farmer organizations to support succession planning of farms between generations and providing rural employers with a training tax credit to help them train employees for a future in agriculture.

The truth is that the future of farming is important to every Ontarian. We need to plan for the future. We need to ensure that the future generation of farmers is supported and trained so that we have food security for the future of all Ontarians.

The New Democratic Party has proposed a buy-Ontario commitment which will make it the law that Ontario's money is spent here in Ontario, which will encourage food processors to purchase local foods.

The Ontario Market Investment Fund needs to be expanded to invest in local supply chains, including

regional food hubs, to link farmers directly with processors, restaurants and consumers. The more marketing and promotion and help we give these farmers, the better it helps local economies. These small producers need support in these areas and cannot be expected to do this alone.

Something that I believe strongly in is manufacturing raw resources right here in our province. As in mining, I feel no differently about the agricultural sector. These are our resources, our food, and should be our choices. The government can support these initiatives by providing relief from municipal taxation and zoning restrictions to encourage on-farm processing.

If the government is set on supporting these industries and increasing marketing practices and making it easier for them to get their products on the shelves, we need to see a clear plan on how this will be achieved. Every dollar of sale in the agricultural sector generates an extra \$2.40 in sales in the local economy. If you needed a stronger economic argument on why we need to support this sector, I truly don't know of one.

We know that the evidence says that people are more likely to meet dietary recommendations when they have ready access to grocery stores with healthy and affordable food, as opposed to convenience stores that offer mostly packaged processed foods. How much closer to home can you get than local food? These producers are solutions to the problem.

I know many in my communities in Algoma–Manitoulin are watching this bill with great hopes, people like Ted, Errol, Glen, Katherine, Ross, Mike, Laura, Gail, Mark and many, many more. They support the 40-plus local producers that Algoma–Manitoulin so proudly has, and attend local farmers' markets across the North Shore and on St. Joseph and Manitoulin Islands. Let's take the opportunity to grow this industry and bring out even more people to access local healthy foods.

Northern Ontario is not only a leader in the primary sector industries; it is positioning itself to become a knowledge-based economy, building on its traditions and strength and expanding in the areas of innovation and collaboration. Northern agriculture is important to the health, the economic viability and to the diversity of northern communities. The north is an emerging player in the agricultural sector, and the sector needs to continue to be supported so that communities can look to sources of foods and fibres close to home.

This bill is indeed a step in the right direction, but we can do much, much more if we want to make a difference for the health of our community members, the livelihood of our farmers, and the future of all Ontarians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a privilege talking to this because it is truly an exciting opportunity here that we cannot let go by.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate and thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for his excellent remarks. I'm still confused somewhat as to why the

members of the opposition and the third party continue to believe—and lead people to believe—that Agricultural Week cannot be in the same week as Local Food Week. It completely boggles my mind, because to me they go hand in hand. We're encouraging the people who live in our urban areas to support our local farming community and, to me, what better way to do that than to have both in the same week?

He also talked about the professor from the University of Guelph who said this is a foundational stone, and I agree. That's what this bill is all about: continuing the progress we've made in the past with regard to promoting consumption of local food here in Ontario.

I'm not going to use this prop, but I am actually proud of all the local retailers in the Metro flyer this week, with my picture in four different spots, celebrating with the people who do good things in our major retail chains across the province of Ontario. They are working hard. They're working hard at promoting the Local Food Act component and encouraging people, and we're supporting them in doing so.

We do not need to have legislation that forces people in Ontario to buy a certain type of food. That's not the country I live in. That's not the province I live in, where we're going to tell people that they have to buy a certain amount of this particular kind of food. That type of suggestion is just completely wrong-headed. That's why we have not legislated targets in this particular bill; we do not want to compromise our trade obligations.

I look forward to speaking more in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise to add comment to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. He raises some good points. I come from the agriculture field, and I certainly know—even the ministry, I think, is aware—that there's a difference between agriculture and food, and that's why they segregate it.

I know this government forgot about the food part, and they had to go back. Once they were reminded that there is an extra ministry and staff around that, they did rectify it. But it just went to show how little this government pays attention to rural issues. The next step was not knowing about Agriculture Week. I can't explain how else you could re-designate it as food week. The tire tax: After promising to consult with rural stakeholders, they blindsided them with this latest eco tax—a tax is a tax with this government.

We see time and time again that this government has not consulted with the agriculture community, or they would have let them know about Agriculture Week and Local Food Week being the same. It's unfortunate that the government wouldn't have somebody on their staff who would know that and correct the Premier before she let that go, because it is a bit of a gaffe and a bit of an embarrassment, I'm sure, for the ministry.

Agriculture is very important. It's our second-largest industry in this province, and it needs some help and a bit of work with this government that they haven't seen over

the last eight or nine years. I know our critic, Ernie Hardeman, was a big part of the local program for insurance, and they were very appreciative about that, but I think we want to see more from this government. Maybe we will, but hopefully they'll consult with stakeholders in the future and get the next program right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to be able to stand and raise my voice on G36 and to add comments to my colleague's speech on it. I know that in my riding we have farmers' markets that are doing just this; they're making sure that people are able to get local food, and we're promoting that on a regular basis.

I know that we have a wonderful Hamilton market downtown in our city. There's a lot of local food in there, and there are other foods that come from other countries, and people enjoy the benefits. Nobody is ever saying that we don't want to enjoy the benefits of other countries, but we need to ensure that we do have enough local food that people will be able to take part in that.

We have the Victory Gardens in Hamilton. We're constantly growing beds of gardens, and the community helps take care of those gardens to ensure that everybody has the ability to have fresh fruits and vegetables.

1410

I've been working on an initiative, in my riding, of aquaponics, working with the city of Hamilton trying to make sure that we can have an aquaponic facility in our city that will be a not-for-profit and be able to grow fresh tilapia and vegetables. It'll be a not-for-profit, so we will be feeding the local food banks at the same time. That will create jobs, it will create initiative and it will create community partners. We're all very excited about the project and looking forward to it coming to fruition.

But like I said, we're all supportive of other countries bringing in—it's not about the free and fair trade; it's about making sure that we're supporting our local farmers. I really am looking forward to this getting to committee so that we can discuss those issues further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to again speak on this bill and this important industry that we have in Ontario. We have so many people that work so hard to get things done. In my own area, we have a dairy farmer who went into the wine business, the Perrault winery in Navan. It's four jobs, five jobs for the local economy. It could be more if he could get better access to the market. He loses probably four or five months a year because of access to his farm, but he's a very successful winery.

We have Cleroux, along the Navan Road, who supplied fresh fruits and vegetables to the market in Ottawa and to local people for 40 or 50 years. We have to encourage them. We see some discussion about the market, that it has to be invigorated for these—but it's a great attraction in Ottawa, and all the fresh foods. The superstore in Orléans has a lot of programs to get the percentage of local produce that they sell. They monitor

it, and they've been doing an excellent job. So we've got a lot of partners in this. I think we have to strengthen our partners.

The minister was down in our area last year and brought all the local food producers together. How can we improve their businesses? They are tough businesses, but certainly something we have to continue right across the province. If you've seen the way they produce tomatoes in Florida, they take them along in these gravel trucks; that's the same type of truck we get gravel in, about three or four feet deep. The tomatoes are designed so that they're hard enough to truck like gravel. They're all green and by the time they get up here they're nice and red, but there's no taste to them. So we've got to get more local food. It's good for us; it's good for the kids; it's good for the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans has just hit it right on, looking at local initiatives. I'm so happy that you have that opportunity and have developed those opportunities in your area. We need to share that across the province. It's not protectionist measures; it's doing what's right for your local economy. You're absolutely right. I would expect you to share those comments with the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who really doesn't understand the difference between the two days. You should talk to a farmer and maybe you'll be able to understand as far as what it means promoting foods and promoting other agricultural venues.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry: I agree with you and I'm glad you highlighted that stuff, the problematic legislation that is there and the processing standards that are very much a challenge for the farming communities.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain: What more of an initiative do we not want to give to our youth and some of our supportive community members by providing them with an incentive to creating life, by creating programs that are there, by getting them excited about getting into the agriculture sector and by telling them how dynamic it is and what the purpose is? It's not just a job; it really is a lifestyle. But if those supports, if those programs, if those incentives are not there to excite those kids and that we get them early, while they're in school—we're talking about doing the same thing with our tradesmen, but let's do the same thing with our agricultural sector. If you do that, then you lay the seed, no pun intended. If you do that early, while they're there, you will create a sense of pride in a child, where he puts a seed in water, watches it germinate and sees it grow. And you know what? When he pulls it and cultivates it, cooks it and feeds it, you will not lose on that opportunity. It's a wonderful, fantastic feeling, and I would just encourage the member to really look at this as far as what the potential is with this bill. Let's get it right. Let's get it into committee. I'm very excited about this, and I look forward to having many, many more discussions about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and to speak about the local food bill. This is a wonderful bill, and I think it's a bill that pays tribute to all the farmers in Ontario. When I was brought up, there were a lot of farmers around my little community of Kiamika. Every farmer had their farm animals, but they also all had a big garden.

We were not living on a farm, but we had our garden at home. Like the previous speaker was saying, in the spring and the beginning of summer, my dad and my siblings and I were preparing the garden. We were learning that food does not grow in a store, but food grows in the garden. It was a wonderful experience for us. Also, yes, we were all excited to go and see the garden coming about and, later on in the summer, picking up our own vegetables, cooking them and having a lot of pleasure eating these wonderful and very tasty meals.

If passed, the local food 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 schools and wherever they are. Growing and making food creates jobs and economic growth in Ontario.

People are shocked when I tell them that the agri-food industry is the second-largest industry in Ontario and also that it does create jobs. It contributes \$34 billion to our economy. They are shocked. They think that most of the food comes from Mexico or the southern part of the United States, but no, it's a great and very lucrative industry in Canada and in Ontario. Also, the agri-food industry supports more than 700,000 jobs across the province. But it has another ripple effect: the food processing sector also creates jobs. More than 94,000 people are working in our 3,000 manufacturing businesses in Ontario and contribute almost \$10 billion to our GDP, so it's impressive.

As an MPP who has two very excellent farmers' markets in my area—everybody knows when they come to Ottawa that the best place to go is to the farmers' market in downtown Ottawa. You have a good farmers' market, and around that you have wonderful restaurants. Most of the restaurants around are buying their fruits and vegetables and often also their meat from the market.

We have the wonderful maple sugar industry. This is also part of the agri-food industry in Ontario. It's the right time. It was one of the best seasons, this season. I have two of my family who have sugar bushes. Those of you who have tasted les sous-produits de l'érablière de ma soeur—it's wonderful. So I wanted again to say what a wonderful industry it is.

1420

In our area—and I want to pay tribute to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He's a great representative of his riding. He's very proud of his riding. In his riding also he talked about all the good families who have been working in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who have been established there since the turn of the century.

The farm goes from father to son and to grandson, and it's nice to see that. These farms sometimes change the products that they have on their farm. Some of them now have wineries, or they produce their own beer, or they have their sugar bush, or they also have—all the farmers got together at one point at the turn of the century to open the St-Albert cheese factory. All of this is helping to develop a very lucrative industry in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Also in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, you have the Guelph campus in Alfred. It's an agricultural school. It contributes to form all these sons and daughters who have chosen to continue the family business, the farming business in the area.

So this bill is a very positive bill. Of course, there have been suggestions here in this House that we may amend it or want something different in the bill. That's why we want to quickly bring this bill to committee and all the good ideas that you can provide to improve the bill. That is a good process to make sure that when we will vote on this bill, we have one of the best bills in Canada, if it's not the best. There is always a possibility to strengthen the bill, and our intent is to support, promote and celebrate the good things that are grown and made in Ontario. I know that you all have your own ideas how we can improve and strengthen the bill.

The proposed bill, if passed, combined with the non-legislative elements, will take Ontario a long way to achieving that goal. If passed, the bill will support, promote and celebrate food grown and made in Ontario. I think it's the responsibility of all of us to make sure that when we buy food at the store or at the farmers' market, we check: Is it grown in Ontario? Where does it come from? Because we know that in Ontario we have good food and that it's safe food to eat also, which is very, very important. In this bill, we didn't just want to support our farmers; we wanted to increase the sale of local food. By having this week to celebrate, we will be able to celebrate and educate the public about what is grown here in Ontario.

The member from Hamilton was talking about the community gardens. That's another area where, for those people who live in town and don't have a backyard to grow a garden like we had when we were young, now there are these community gardens. It's another way, also, to be able to bring local food to the table.

But the objective of this bill is to increase the sales of local food. We want local food to be available wherever Ontario residents eat in the province: at home, in restaurants, in schools and in hospitals. I know that some of the restaurants are very proud of themselves, and they are advertising that all the food that is served in their restaurant is local food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: As most people in this House will know—and those listening at home—Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is the beef capital of Ontario, and in fact Canada. Agriculture has been, is, and always will be the backbone

of our local economy. We are always proud to say that if agricultural industry is doing well, we're all doing well.

We all know that our food does not just show up in the grocery store. It is grown in those local areas. It is something that our farmers take great pride in, in the safety and production of a quality product and bringing it to market for all of us. Of course, at the very extent of it, we would support anything that's going to promote locally grown food.

However, this bill does not address the challenges farmers are facing. This bill does nothing to address such things as the red tape and the regulation; the increasing hydro costs for our farmers; the small abattoirs closing across rural Ontario; the destruction of the horse racing industry; and, most recently, the Ontario Tire Stewardship, which actually penalized and was very punitive to the agricultural and farming community.

It's very interesting that this bill would be introduced with great fanfare that they're the saviour of agriculture and they're going to be the ones that are going to drive it, despite only making a part-time commitment to this very, very, very significant industry in our great province of Ontario.

It kind of is a tough one for me to say too much positive, because I think there's just a lot of nothing in this bill, which doesn't really do it. I'm told that ag groups provided much input. However, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals ignored it and instead tabled this bill, which is virtually a fair bit of fluff and not a whole lot that, as I said earlier, is really going to help address the challenges that our farmers face.

If you were serious—if the Liberals across the floor were serious about this bill, we would have hoped that they would have taken some points from the white paper drafted by our member from Oxford, a former Minister of Agriculture, who is well respected and well regarded across the industry. Regardless of where we go with him in an agricultural setting, people come up to him and look to him for his advice and his comment on what the current government is doing. So I hope they'll take time to reach out and speak to him and improve this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand up and join the debate this afternoon. I listened to the remarks by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

We obviously are going to support this bill. Local food is important. Supporting Ontario farmers is important, from an economic perspective. Obviously, we're in good fortune that we have land we can grow food on in Ontario, and we need to protect that. For all those reasons, New Democrats will support this bill.

However, the minister's remarks that it's our responsibility as consumers to check where our food is grown, at our markets and so forth—sure, that's fine. But there has to be—we're here in a Legislature to, hopefully, bring forth legislation that will influence public policy here, and that's what's missing in this bill.

We have a week, Local Food Week, and that's what we're counting on to change our food system in Ontario?

This is just barely the tip of the iceberg. We have so much further that we need to go. It's like if we had a week called Ontario jobs week, and that was our jobs plan for Ontario; or Ontario anti-bullying week, which I think we have now, and we assume that's going to solve bullying problems in this province; or health week—instead of hospitals, we just have a health week.

That's not how you do things. That's not what makes sense here. I think there's so much more that we need to do. I've put these suggestions on the record before, but unfortunately the health minister just left. I thought that while we had our current—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can't mention the absence of any member.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I apologize; sorry. I did not mean that in any way.

While some of these cabinet ministers are here—we have a budget date now, May 2, and we have food budgets coming off the table. We have a government that has cut off people's special-diet benefits in this province. Could you please respond to that? Because money that low-income people make is all spent locally. It's all spent locally in Ontario, so I'd like to see if we're going to see any progress on that issue here.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to make one thing very, very clear: We on this side of the House are not pretending to try to be the saviours of farmers or agriculture. If someone wants to cast themselves in the role of saviour, you can do it over there. Our farmers don't need salvation—at least in that sense. They're hard-working folk there who, frankly, every single day, take all of the risks to lay on our table the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world. There's no messiah complex over here about what farmers need. We're quite satisfied that farmers know what they need. They know how to go about doing the job that they need to do, and they do it very, very well.

This is about celebrating farmers. From my perspective, picking up on my social worker friend on the other side, it's about making every day food day in Ontario. That would be ideal. And by the way, my riding is number one for veal per capita and number one for Christmas trees per capita too; I just want to put that on the record.

We're committed to working with groups. You can say, "Well, they're aspirational goals, and gosh golly gee, ain't that awful? Why don't you be regulatory and put it all down on paper so it's all fixed, and all the reporting"—and had we done that, the official opposition would have been all over us like a wet blanket, saying, "No, no, don't be regulatory; we want to cut red tape."

Well, you know what? We're prepared to work with groups because we understand and we've heard from many, many folk that everyone would prefer to arrive together rather than to be driven anywhere. You're talking about agricultural education and standing with groups: The first thing you've got to do is sit down and

be willing to work with them. This bill allows us to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment?

I return to the Minister for Community Safety and francophone affairs for her reply.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, if some people have good ideas—this bill was drafted after five large consultations and hearing from the farmers, from the producers and from the manufacturing side of this industry. This bill was put together after listening to all of those people, but there is always a place to improve the bill. At the committee, that's the time to improve the bill, and we welcome that.

I want again to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture and Food for bringing this bill to the House. But in the few minutes that I have, I want again to talk about la Fromagerie St-Albert. La Fromagerie St-Albert is five generations of farmers and craftsmen that have worked to develop—it's a co-op; a very nice model. It's owned by more than 50 producers in the Glengarry–Prescott–Russell area. Early this year, they had the misfortune of having a big fire which destroyed their factory. I admire these people because instead of saying, “Government, come to us. Give us money. We need to rebuild,” the next day, within 24 hours, the CEO of St-Albert went on camera and said, “We are going to rebuild. We're not going to let this bring”—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The whole community came together.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: All the community, yes, came together, and all the other cheese factories around came together also, not to compete, but to support them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss Bill 36 in the House. There are a couple of comments I want to make. It's good to see the Attorney General is here, because I know that when we were debating this in the past, I made some comments regarding certain industries as they relate to food and agriculture. I think he was kind of surprised at the issues I was dealing with.

All you have to do is go back to my younger days when Baba was around, and the garden she had and everything she produced there. It's much the same as driving up Glenarm Road with the Mennonites who are up there. When you go by there, they've got all the food that's prepared there. But quite frankly, some of the nutritional things that are required to be labelled and all these things to ensure that individuals providing those homegrown services right in Ontario comply with the guidelines and the needs that are out there, get a little bit difficult.

Some of the other stuff, though, is when you ask some of the youth of today what's happening out there and where the food comes from. Well, a lot of kids in school today will say, “Well, it comes from the factory.” You know, they need to gain an understanding of what

happens and how these things come to be, to be able to provide these foods for us.

I did quite a bit of research on the weekend in a number of locations, trying to dig up things I want to talk about. But the legislation specifically states:

“The purposes of this act are as follows:

“1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario”—and I want to get into some of those economies and systems.

“2. To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food”—and that's one of the key things that I want to talk about.

“3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food.”

I do have some concerns with a lot of the promotion of the growth aspect of the retail side; you know, it's kind of a push-and-pull strategy. I think we need some of that retail initiative in order to be able to assist. I can tell you that last year, for example, I tried to work with my sons, Josh and Garrett, who wanted to retail some of the products that I'll talk about—wild leeks. You want to know something? You try to talk to some of these retail chains, and you've got to go through central office and talk to the warehouse about any of that stuff, because there wasn't an incentive to promote those sorts of things.

Now in Oshawa, we've got a number of things. In the north end at the Legends Centre, we've got the farmers' market that starts on May 19; it's the third year. And the North Oshawa Farmers' Market that runs at the Oshawa Centre has been going on since 1959 and runs from May till October. Not only that, we've also got the Downtown Oshawa Farmers' Market beside the old Regent Theatre on Tuesdays from 11 to 4:30.

Being an urban member from Oshawa, basically the urban part of Oshawa, there are a couple of small farms in there. We have Glaspell's on Townline Road, who raise prize-winning sheep and have an outstanding dairy operation; and the Werry farm on Harmony Road North, as well as Werrcroft Farms on Ritson Road and their outstanding Holsteins. There's a number of things.

Now, what I wanted to get to was what the Attorney General was talking about. I know that one minister mentioned some of the aspects; for one thing, about maple syrup. She spoke about maple syrup. It's really hard to find data. I found some data—I'm sure the government has not even seen this report, because it's dated and there has not been an update on this particular report. But it talks about 80% of the maple syrup in Ontario is sold at the sugar bush or in local stores. So, when you go by the St. Lawrence Market on the weekend, there are all kinds for maple syrup for sale there. It's the same at the small sugar bush operators locally—Purple Woods, with CLOCA, the local conservation authority, retails it up there.

But about two thirds of the maple syrup sold in Ontario is imported from Quebec. Now, that's the difficulty. We have great producers out there, but there really isn't an organized market to be able to retail those sorts of

aspects. Of the total Canadian production of maple syrup, 90% is exported to more than 25 countries, and a majority of that goes to the United States. Now, the export market in that particular area reached \$108.6 million, but this basically goes back to 1999 data, because there hasn't been an update on any of that information that has been brought forward, which is about 23,447 tonnes of maple syrup that's retailed. On top of that, the States gets 89% of the exports from Ontario—from Canada—in maple syrup alone, with Europe only getting 5% and Asia getting another 5%.

Now, back in 2008, I had the privilege and honour to take our kids to Egypt. Quite frankly, one of the things I always do is check the local markets and see what they're retailing. Well, it was great and wonderful that they had maple syrup there, but they were promoting the fact it was 10% real maple syrup in the syrup they were providing.

Think of the opportunities and the ability to expand that market throughout world markets. Right now, a lot of us just look to the States, when there's huge demand in a lot of other countries around the world where we can retail these sorts of things.

Most people don't realize that in Canada the maple syrup industry is surpassed only by frozen French fries—most people in agricultural commodities don't realize that—according to the report of bygone days, because it hasn't been updated.

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Now, there's another industry I wanted to talk about, which is very interesting as well. Quite frankly, in the time frames that we have, it's difficult to try to get all the information that we have out there. Most people don't realize that Canada is the primary supplier of wild and cultivated blueberries for the United States. In 1998, there were 7,454 tonnes of wild blueberries from Canada that were shipped into the States, which represented about 99.5% of that market that goes to the States. But the difficulty with that is that there's not a lot of export going to other locations. We're looking at new locations, and when the US economy is on a downturn, it's very, very difficult to try to find new markets. We need to open those markets now to ensure that those sales—and, quite frankly, if you drive around, if you look at most of the places where a lot of the wild blueberries are retailed, they're at side stands and everything else where people can pick them up.

Here's another one that the Attorney General may find very interesting. This is 1997 data because it hasn't been updated since then. The demand for wild mushrooms—the world demand is basically a \$900-million industry. Some of the other things with wild mushrooms that people may find—it's very hard to find data on this sort of stuff. However, the total earnings for wild mushroom harvesting—and it was difficult because there is no data that was collected for Ontario. But in northern Saskatchewan—can you imagine this, Attorney General?—in 1996, wild mushroom harvesters were making, on average, \$300,000 a year. These are the sorts of things that we have to look at; we have to look outside the box.

In the past, I was kind of throwing some tidbits out there about these sort of things that we were talking about, whether it was the maple syrup and the wild mushrooms and all those other things. But now I'm trying to give you some actual factual data of what is potentially available out there and some of the things that we have to look at because, as I stated earlier on, this includes the diversity of local food in establishing new systems and new economies. Guess what? Here's some opportunities that are out there that people never really thought about that, if we looked at them, we may have the opportunity to expand on some of those things.

There's a great number of other things that are utilized in the province of Ontario that most people don't realize are even there, like the inner bark on the eastern white pine. Can you imagine this? We're talking about eastern white pine trees—a volatile oil that's used in inhalants. Not only that, but the bark in black cherry is used in cough syrup. There are all sorts of things. At one time, willow—the bark from a willow tree—was used in aspen, or Aspirin; sorry. Aspen is a form of a tree.

These are the sorts of things that—if we start doing the research out there—Ontario has to offer. If we're looking at new diversities and new systems that could be developed out there, there is a vast amount of information that could be utilized that, quite frankly, we could become a world leader in because nobody is jumping on the bandwagon. Here I am giving you the opportunity. I'm probably the only one, although the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, from up Manitoulin way, would certainly see a lot of the blueberries that take place.

One of the other things that I wanted to talk about—I was really kind of hoping for a significant amount more time because there was a lot of things I wanted to bring to the attention—was wild rice, for example. Most people don't realize that Canada, as a whole, produces 1.1 million kilograms of wild rice. Most of that, though, unfortunately, comes out of Saskatchewan. There are huge opportunities for a lot of wild rice demands throughout the world.

One other area—and I'm running out of time, so I'm trying to get as many as I can in—is the new Canadian tea market. Most people don't realize that we have a great opportunity, and from the Far North the First Nation communities have something called Labrador tea. It's a plant that grows in northern Ontario, and the First Nations community utilizes it quite extensively. But the Canadian tea market has been estimated at over \$390 million, based on 1997 data.

I think the thing I'm trying to point out here, Speaker, in the time I've been allocated—there's a lot more things that I could go on in details about, but I'm trying to bring something a little bit different to the table on ways that we can look at how we can make and be a leader around the world on some of the things that a lot of people really never thought about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comments to the member from Oshawa's speech. I'm going

to ask him a question. I appreciate how much he condensed into his 10 minutes. I'm up next with my 10 minutes, so you've given me a good gauge of what I should focus on, because there is certainly a lot of information when it comes to food production, not only in this province, but across the country. He mentioned right from the outset of his speech the barriers to the retail side that I think his sons were attempting to get into with wild leeks. I'd like to give him the opportunity to expand on that, because I think it's an important thing when our primary producers are putting out wonderful products, innovative products and healthy products, yet are faced with corporate conglomerates that put up big walls to gaining access to those markets, whether they be on a provincial or regional basis. I'm going to hope that he addresses that in the two minutes that he can.

Otherwise, he certainly enlightened us to the variety and expansive nature of agriculture production and food production in this province and how important it is for us to understand it and to understand the diversity, not only the diversity in products and the economy, but ecology as well. Let's remember that wild blueberry production feeds an ecology in northern Ontario that allows significant wildlife to flourish in that area. Not only is it an economical and nutritional benefit, but an environmental benefit that we should also be promoting in the context of food and agriculture and our natural resources.

I'm really happy that he highlighted those issues. I didn't know the size of our wild mushroom market. It's quite enormous and it makes me hungry, frankly, to try to experience all of that wonderful, bountiful produce that we have at our disposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to rise to speak about Bill 36, with respect to the Local Food Act. As a member from Toronto, an urban centre, there is no better place to talk about food, because we know that we need to work with our rural neighbours. This particular piece of legislation will address a very important industry that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has talked about, the fact that this particular food industry represents about \$55 billion. That's a lot of money for farmers, for processors, for distributors, retailers, restaurateurs—the entire food service operators.

But most importantly, this is a growing sector that our government has consistently supported through different kinds of legislation but, more importantly, through our activities in consulting with the farmers. As much as the opposition and third party said, "They haven't consulted," let me correct the record. I do want to recognize the opposition and the third party. The members from Algoma-Manitoulin, Davenport and Essex talked earlier about how this is a first step. I believe this is the first of many steps. One piece of legislation alone cannot address all the issues we have identified here as we debate this particular legislation.

More importantly, coming from an urban centre like my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, we value and

appreciate, with regard to this legislation, that it helps us to promote, educate and, at the same time, appreciate the importance of a very large group of sectors, the farmers. I know that the young people in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt this past summer had an opportunity to visit a farm just outside of Scarborough and really enjoyed it. That's why through this legislation we'll have more opportunities to address this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to stand in the chamber today discussing food. One of my favourite pastimes is indulging in eating. There have been some very good points that have arisen here this afternoon, and I think the member from Oshawa has done a fantastic job in pointing out some of the shortcomings of what this bill is and represents. A lot of what we need to do is to tackle these issues of the barriers that are preventing the great produce and products that we in rural Ontario grow and raise to market. I want to thank the member for Oshawa for making those points very clear. It's nice to know that we have members in the chamber here who do their homework when it comes to such an issue as this.

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Being a beef producer myself, and also a grains producer, this is an area that I obviously have a vested interest in, both from, I guess you could say, a spiritual side of things, working on the land and getting back to nature, but also in taking pride in producing high-quality food items that go to the grocery stores here in Toronto and the other regions.

This bill definitely is lacking in what we need. I'll be talking about it during my 10 minutes later today or at the earliest convenience that I'm able to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: Once again, I'm happy to stand to this debate.

I've been listening to the members and different statements that have been made. The member from Scarborough-Agincourt stated that other members of this House said that this is a first step, and that nobody's been consulted, and that these are the things that are being said on this side. Well, if true stakeholders had been consulted, we probably wouldn't have the week of agriculture day and food day on the exact same days. These are things that just show us that we need further consultation, that things need to be talked over with stakeholders.

One of the concerns on this side of the House is that the minister has the ability to establish goals or targets to aspire to, an ability to establish targets for specific public sector partners. You know, it would be really nice to see actual targets placed into this bill already and not just something that will come back in three years, and then she'll be able to look at targets.

When they say that we're questioning the whole bill, well, of course we are. First of all, that's our job to do,

and secondly, this is a Liberal pat-on-the-head bill. This is a bunch of fuzzy, warm, hugging, kissing, let's-get-together bill that—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Sometimes that's okay.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sure, sometimes it's okay to have that. But when we're in a minority situation, we should be able to get actual things done. It's not just that the Liberals always know best. There are other members of this House who do have the majority of this House, and we should be working together to make sure that we do have good, sustainable bills happening right along. We've been putting forward ideas, and we're looking forward to getting it to committee. That's why we're allowing it to pass to committee, so that we can make sure there are things in here that are really going to do things for our agriculture.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Fiddleheads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, so I return to the member for Oshawa for his reply.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the comments from the members from Hamilton Mountain, Northumberland—Quinte West, Scarborough—Agincourt and Essex.

The Attorney General was asking: What are the ideas? I think I put significant new ideas on the table during this discussion that really haven't come forward before, although the Minister of Correctional Services did speak about maple syrup and her ties with that. But we need to advance that so we can get that further.

One of the problems with maple syrup is some of the regulation that comes in under the maple syrup act. One of the service providers was essentially shut down because of a lack of assistance. I'm not saying it's anyone's fault; it's just the way the operation—I think there were 1,000 or 2,000 trees.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You want more subsidies for them.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: No, not necessarily. They wanted guidance and direction to make sure what they were doing was in the fashion that would be acceptable—except they were harassed to the point where they shut down.

The member from Essex spoke about wild leeks. I can tell you that what we tried to do was, we went to a number of food providers out there, and none of them were interested at all. We all had to go through the big office, the head office, through the warehouse, through distribution. Effectively, that meant that you go from here to there, and then if they ship it in, then guess what? It can be a local commodity. I don't see anything in here or out there where it says that the local farmer, the Werrys down the road, can be able to sell and retail unless it's a small mom-and-pop operation. Some of the big conglomerates where most of the retail goods are sold don't have opportunities to bring that in. You've got to go through central distribution.

Some of the other stuff, in the time remaining: I did go down to St. Lawrence Market to try to check and find out

the opportunities that are there. One of the difficulties is that the wild leeks are just one small opportunity, but it's such a narrow window of opportunity to retail them that basically you have to get a table for a whole year for a three- or four-week or maybe a month period of time to retail them, and it's not cost-effective to do that. Besides, you have to go on a waiting list to do that. Fiddleheads, as the Attorney General was mentioning, at the St. Lawrence Market were actually being retailed for \$20 a pound, just to give people a perspective of what is available out there.

There are a lot more things that hopefully we can discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am really honoured, actually, to have some time today to address agriculture in the province of Ontario under the guise of the Local Food Act, G36, which is a reintroduction of an act.

From the outset, I would like to talk about my riding, Essex county. For those of you in this chamber who aren't familiar with Essex county, it is home to some of the most fertile soil in the province. Some of the numbers we have: As of 2006, you may or may not know that 47% of Ontario's total greenhouse production—47%; that equals 5,494,164 square metres of greenhouse production—is encompassed and is housed in Essex county, mainly in Leamington and Kingsville, which also represents a huge amount of tomato production. Therefore, the Heinz tomato cannery is located in Leamington. Production equals more production on the value-added side in terms of processing at the Heinz facility, and then it equals consumption, as well, because we all know this country makes a mean ketchup. That's a wonderful connection between our agriculture food chain and production and our local economies.

That's all at risk, and much more, if not only provincial governments but federal governments don't start taking agriculture production seriously in this province. This is why we have to look at Bill 36 as not even coming nearly close to addressing those issues.

What it does—and those tuning in on TV today and listening in the chamber have heard quite clearly—is that it simply sets out, in its most basic format, a week that we can call and dedicate Local Food Week. It falls on the same week, as it happens, as Agriculture Week—two very distinct things; two very important issues.

My colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane really pointed it out to this House when he gave his leadoff statement. He said that local Agriculture Week is about the producers, about the farmers. I'll talk to you on that just after.

But Local Food Week is about the product. Those are very, very different things. We should dedicate, certainly, a portion of our time to addressing those two issues. It's like having Mother's Day and Father's Day on the same day. You know what? I think they're two individuals, and they're two important people; we should celebrate them both. We should give them their own individual day to

celebrate them—or just call it Family Day and we'll be done with it. I don't think that's appropriate. I don't think it shows the appropriate amount of respect to our primary producers.

So here we are debating what is essentially deeming a week of the year to local food. What we should be talking about is the protection of our agriculture system. We should be talking about not only a national food policy but a provincial food policy, something that is lacking; something that addresses the ever-increasing pressures on our primary producers from free trade agreements that have been negotiated federally from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

I remember them because I remember my parents putting me on a bus as a young boy, at 10 years old by myself, along with farmers in my area to go and protest the original GATT agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in this province, where farmers circled the House of Commons in their tractors to protest what essentially was selling out their industry. What came next? The free trade agreement, which opened the door to cheap imports from the United States. What came after that was a promise by the federal Liberals under Chrétien to abolish the free trade agreement. But then what happened? We got NAFTA. We got expanded trade agreements that further degraded our primary producers' ability to compete.

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So you've got the dumping of cheap products into our country, into this province, that have absolutely decimated the producer side—absolutely. Whether it's in soft fruits or in vegetables or beef and other industries, they simply can't compete. But yet we see another 50 free trade agreements that are ready to be signed internationally—multinational agreements—that are on the books at the federal level without a peep from this provincial government. CETA, which will 100% decimate our milk and poultry producers: not a peep about fairness in our trade agreements.

These are all done under the cloak of secrecy. We know that governments actually have no real part to play. Ultimately, we get a free trade agreement that's signed, and everything is supposed to be good after that. Obviously, it has not benefited our primary producers to the extent that has been touted.

If agriculture is our second most important industry—in terms of economic activity—nationally and in the province; it contributes the second most amount, just behind our manufacturing sector, why shouldn't we protect it? We absolutely should. In fact, I say that agriculture production and food production in this country and in this province is the most important—bar none, by far—issue that we have. Why? Because if you cannot produce your own food and you do not secure the source of production, then you are as vulnerable, as a nation, as you would be in times of war. That may sound extreme, but if we can't feed ourselves, and we don't ensure that that exchange of knowledge in terms of how to grow and how to produce food—if we don't ensure that the Monsantos and the

ADMs and the Cargills aren't controlling that massive industry and looking to degrade those small family farmers, to control their production and to augment their cost of production, then we are vulnerable. I see nothing in this bill G36 that even comes close remotely to addressing that issue. It boggles my mind that such an important issue can simply be addressed by a week of, "Hip, hip, hurray; we all love our farmers."

You know what? They want you to do something. They need you to do something. They need you to stand up and to ensure that business risk management programs are fulfilled and sustained so that in times of need those programs are there. That is an important component.

They also need you to acknowledge that farmers are important stewards of our land. They add an incredible component to the overall environmental sustainability of our province. They have no-till, low-till processes that are innovative. They are absolutely, incredibly innovative in terms of their production and upgrades to their own machinery and facilities that we don't put a value on. We don't say, "We know you're doing a great job in reducing your carbon footprint. Let's help you out." We don't say that. We simply say, "Let the market play its role there, and if you can survive against the Monsantos and the Cargills and the ADMs, well that's fine."

Mr. Speaker, it begs the question: If we really took agriculture production seriously in this province—truly, sincerely—why wouldn't we have a standing committee on agriculture as they do at the federal level? What has gone on here? We're going to dedicate one simple week to agriculture production and local food, and another week to agricultural production, so two separate weeks out of the entire calendar year, but yet we don't have a format and a venue to discuss really important issues that affect farmers and food production in this province, whether it's a supply chain or regulatory regimes or how we can enhance local food consumption and promotion. I think the most suitable body for that is a standing committee on agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, when we become the official government in this province—which hopefully will happen very soon—then I will make a real effort to put that forward, because that is a tangible way to tell our agriculture community that we actually believe in them, we actually can listen to them and we take their ideas seriously: through a standing committee. That's a wonderful idea that—you know what?—could have been infused, along with so many other great ideas, in this Local Food Act.

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell says, "We don't need to. We shouldn't set targets. Let's just make it arbitrary. Everyone should, just out of the goodness of their hearts, buy local food." First of all, they can't find it because it's hidden in the shelves of the mega supermarkets. They don't do a good job promoting local food, despite any of your best efforts. Let's set some targets for our ministries here.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our Minister of Safety and Correctional Services: Should we not ensure that if we're

putting food into our correctional facilities, that the vast majority of it be Ontario food? There absolutely should be a threshold that cannot be moved, a set target.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It is.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, it isn't. Absolutely it isn't, not across the entire public sector. Something could have easily been done here, but I think the government continues to bow down to the pressures of the multinationals, because if you set targets—the member from Prescott–Russell said we don't want to violate any of our trading agreements. That's always the old answer; that's always the old excuse: "We can't stand up for farmers because we can't stand against the multinationals." I say: Not only grow a backbone, but grow this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end with this: If you ate today, thank a farmer; and if you are a farmer, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know it's the nature of the place. I've been here for over 16 years, as have the members from York–Simcoe, Haldimand–Norfolk and—let's see—Eglinton–Lawrence. I know that when you're on that side of the House, because we've all been there, you've got to criticize everything that happens here. It's the same thing when you're on this side of the House: You can't agree with everything that's over there.

The first thing that I would recommend is that maybe for a week or for a month we leave all our talking points at home and we come in here and really have an open debate without any preconceived ideas about anything. I'll leave my talking points at home. As a matter of fact, most of the talking points that I get in my constituency office go into the shredder right away because, believe it or not, even though I'm saying this of my own government, if I ever said what was in some of the talking points, people would somehow take it not quite at face value. It's the same thing with what you're saying. Let's be totally honest about that.

Look, this is a great initiative. How could anybody be against a Local Food Act? Now, the member from Essex, who is a respectable member—he's been here for a couple of years now—makes this great distinction between Agriculture Week and Local Food Week, as if these two ideas are somehow in conflict with one another. All I would say to the few people that are watching us—first of all, the people that are watching us right now should get a discount at a food market or something. We love people to watch us, but I'm sure that they would like us to deal with the real issues that are facing Ontario. So please pass this bill, send it to committee, and let's talk about the real issues that affect the people of Ontario on an ongoing basis. Pass this bill now, today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: To follow up on some of the comments the member from Essex—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I know our Attorney General—he's still speaking, actually—has suggested we leave our

talking points at home. It does cross my mind when I—dropping the talking points, it does seem odd, coming from a farm background, that we need a law, that we have to pass legislation with respect to local food.

Growing up on a farm, if you wanted something to eat, certainly in the summer, you just walked outside. During the winter, basically you walk out the back door, go down the lane to one of the barns and you have a choice of either eggs or broilers, lamb, beef. I'm trying to think what else we raised during the winter. Then during the summer, of course, we grew sweet peas; there's nothing better than sweet peas right off the vine. Everybody had gardens, and again, tomatoes, just about everything you could think of. Some of it was commercialized. My grandmother and I grew zucchini and marketed them through the local IGA; I ended up working at the local IGA after that. I worked at Culverhouse Canning. That's where our sweet peas went.

1510

The member from Oshawa made mention of a plethora of wild game. Of course, it won't be long until fiddleheads will be available, and cattail shoots, for example. Maple syrup—we always did maple syrup in the kitchen. We never had wallpaper in our kitchen, because when you're steaming the sap, it peels all the wallpaper off.

Peter Shurman had a meal at my house a year or so ago. I want to let Peter know, I've got some squirrel in the freezer now, so if you'd like to come back—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Toby.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I feel like this debate sometimes is we're just talking about the things we ate today for breakfast, lunch and dinner and all that. I like talking about food, but I think it would be nice to raise the level of debate in the House as well.

I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Essex, who actually does not speak from talking points. In response to the Attorney General, if you were listening, this was putting some good history down in this place, talking about the impacts of free trade. I think it was a good discussion and it's important. That's what we should be speaking about here.

From the Attorney General: I understand that you'd like a different kind of debate here, but I don't know what you expect from us on this side. You've put forward a bill that we've said we're going to support. I can't wait to get it into committee and actually do something with it, but in the meantime, there's absolutely no substance to this. How do you expect us to respond? Speaker, how would the Attorney General like us to respond? We could have a ribbon for local food. Maybe that should be the next big government bill, a local food ribbon, and we would somehow transform our food system here.

Interjection: A hat.

Mr. Jonah Schein: A hat; a local food hat.

This doesn't get us excited. There's a lot of promise here, but there has been very little put on the table, so to speak, here.

My colleague from Essex was talking about the real power of public institutions to transform our food system. That's the kind of thing we need to see here. We have in the House our health minister, our corrections minister. These are massive buying powers that could actually put some weight into supporting our farmers, into supporting our local food economy, but none of that is in the bill. Maybe when the government steps up with a bill with some substance that we can actually get our teeth into, we'll get a bit more excited. In the meantime, I think we're going to continue to hear speakers around this House just listing off some of their favourite foods in Ontario. I could add to that, and maybe I'll do that the next time around—some of my favourites—but I do hope that we can get this into committee and actually do something substantial here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm somewhat shocked here this afternoon to hear my good friend—a real great hockey player, my line-mate on the Legiskaters—say in this House that retailers do not do a good job promoting local food. I can't agree with that. They do not hide local food produce in the back aisles, as was suggested. I was very proud to represent the Minister of Agriculture and Food at the Ontario Foodland Retailer Awards. As I had mentioned earlier, I'm very proud to be in the Metro flyer supporting the good work that they do.

I do have experience in retail stores, having worked for a bread company in the past, so I know what it's like to get listings. I know what it's like to have SKUs in there. I know what it's like to try to get your local products in the major chains. But what I can tell you is, to the comments that we did not consult, I've got a list here of about 150-plus. I would love to stand here, go through all 150 and say that these are the groups and organizations that we as a government actually consulted in preparing this particular piece of legislation.

Not one municipality wants to have prescribed legislated targets. I can refer to the reintroduction of the local food bill. The Rural Ontario Municipal Association doesn't want prescribed targets. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario doesn't want prescribed targets. The beekeepers, I don't imagine, want them as well. We've got this list here, and then, before the introduction—I could go through a number. The National Farmers Union, Jacob Kearey-Moreland, the residents of Orillia—I'm sure they're good people—contributed to this particular bill. It's the right bill at the right time. Let's move it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank all the members who contributed to my 10-minute hit on this.

Ultimately, the main point that I want to reinforce is that of course we all support local food. Of course we all support value-added production of our food. Of course we support the wonderful historic nature of agricultural production and farming in this province. But this bill

doesn't address any of those. It simply lays out a week where the government, we believe, can pat itself on the back for naming the week Local Food Week—that's it. We were hopeful that there would be some tangible, real, progressive measures in here that protected that important nature of the industry.

I will reiterate: What we are protecting and should be protecting and focusing on is that incredibly invaluable knowledge base that is a farmer. These aren't simply people who plant a seed and watch a crop grow. They are accountants. They are mechanics. They are financial advisers. They are folks who are versed in construction. They are climatologists. They are environmentalists. They come with a unique skill set, and if we don't do everything we can to ensure that we have food security and food sovereignty, we will lose that knowledge base.

That's what we should be talking about: losing our domestic production of agriculture, because the corporate forces, the multinational forces that make up the largest agriculture companies on this planet, are applying so much pressure to small producers in Canada that they will cease to exist. A week dedicated to talking about how we should all eat locally grown fruit will not substantially change those pressures. I hope that we take a real, focused measure at some point in the future, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm going to have a bit of fun, because this is one of my pet peeves and subjects, and that is food. I'm a bit of an amateur cook, and I've always been interested in food my whole life. We grew a lot of zucchinis, tomatoes and rapini, all in my backyard, for years. We used to go to Canada Packers at Keele and St. Clair and get our manure right from Canada Packers there by the bushel and bring it back. We didn't buy that packaged stuff at Canadian Tire or these places. You've got to buy the real good natural fertilizer. As you know, the best fertilizer, probably—it's hard to get—is horse fertilizer. It's really good stuff.

I know the members across are making fun of this emphasis on local food, but it is something that is critically important. I totally encourage people to see the economic importance of agriculture, of supporting local agriculture. It is critically important that we make that connection.

That's why, later this month—not this month, but at the end of July—I do my annual tomato festival. This year I'm honoured that the Minister of Rural Affairs is going to be there as the guest speaker. What we do there is, we celebrate the fact that the GTA uses, consumes, more tomatoes than all other North American cities combined. More tomatoes are consumed in the GTA than in all North American cities combined.

That is the connection we try to make. We try to make the connection between the people who need good, fresh, healthy Ontario products. We have the best tomatoes, I think, in the world here in Ontario. You know, in Leamington and area and all over southern Ontario we've got these wonderful natural tomatoes. That's an example.

What I try to do, and I've tried for years, is to encourage people, my small grocers like Zito's, like Lady York—I try and tell them to promote the local Ontario products. Never mind the Mexican tomatoes that are always there. If you look at the shelves today—in fact, I turned away yesterday when I saw Roma tomatoes imported from Mexico.

We've even got wonderful greenhouse tomatoes. I've been to the Mastronardi greenhouse down Leamington way—incredible. We're one of the best greenhouse producers of vegetables in the world here in Ontario. Even in the wintertime we can eat Ontario products.

1520

This legislation is trying to say, “Look at all the government ministries. Look at the schools, the hospitals, our correctional institutions.” We have the ability to try to put a framework through this legislation to encourage them to use Ontario products when we have the opportunity. We need this legislative framework to finally do something in an aggressive way, through this Legislature, to encourage that in everything we do, rather than just saying, “Oh, we're going to set up another committee.” We've got enough committees. Let's start getting down to work and having the government of Ontario use local products, encourage the consumption of local products. It's good for the Ontario economy. It's good for our health, good for small business and good for the farmers. We just can't be passive bystanders. We've got to be engaged, and that's what this legislation does.

I notice I've got two very prominent local food connoisseurs in the gallery here today. I've got Bob Barnett, who has done incredible work on preserving farmland all the way up the Niagara Escarpment. He has done this for years and does great work in protecting our native natural lands.

Bryan Grimes is a local restaurateur, caterer and foodie. He loves Ontario—he introduced me to the incredible Ontario cheddar in Thamesville. You want to taste cheddar. They talk about Gorgonzola and they talk about Caciocavallo and they talk about all these—listen, Ontario cheddar, you get aged Ontario cheddar, it's some of the best cheese in the world. It is incredibly good quality. It can match up with any foreign cheese.

So this is what this act is trying to do. It's trying to educate, legislate the importance of investing in our agriculture, and we can't just do it by committee. We have to talk the talk in our own communities. I know if I look all across this great province, there are so many amazing products that are being made: in Algoma, the Boreal Forest Teas; in Grey county, the Blue Mountains Apple Pie Trail—all kinds of beautiful, locally grown products that need to be respected and promoted. In the Albion Hills, there are farm and learning centres; in Halton region, Springridge Farm. In Bruce and Grey counties, there's Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association and Foodlink Grey Bruce.

We should be promoting these, not just complaining about how bad things are in Ontario. We've got incredible chefs in Ontario. We've got incredible restaurants.

I remember I told the Minister of Tourism—he did a report on tourism, Greg Sorbara did. I said that one of the things we should learn from other countries—it's a great economic driver—is agri-tourism. If you visit or go to restaurants all over Europe, they have agri-tourism, where you go to farms, you go to local restaurants, and on the windows of the restaurants and at the farms, they say, “Come in and eat the local cheese. Drink the local wine.” You can sleep at the farm and eat the local vegetables, all done locally. People come from all over the world to really experience these local products in Europe, and it's good for the local economy. It's good for the appreciation of the local products.

We need to do more agri-tourism in Ontario. Rather than just the bed-and-breakfast thing, we should have farm agri-tourism: When you go to a farm, you eat the local cheddar, the local milk, the local rabbit, goat, Ontario lamb. I know the Tories like promoting New Zealand lamb. We should eat Ontario lamb.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Stand up for Grey-Bruce.

Mr. Mike Colle: Stand up for Ontario goats. We've got great goat production in Ontario. Why do the Tories always talk about European and New Zealand goats and lamb? Eat the local stuff. It's fresh.

Mr. Speaker, you know so well in Wellington county, when you eat local, you really encourage and support local business, whether it's the farmer or the person selling those local products, whether it's cheese, vegetables, meat—Ontario beef. I hear the Tories always talking about Alberta beef and Texas beef. What about Ontario beef? I'll put Ontario beef up to any beef in the world. You've got Bruce county beef. There are some incredible-quality beef products in Ontario. So why do people go to restaurants and say they want Texas beef or Alberta beef? Ask for Ontario beef when you go to a restaurant. When you go to the store, where's the Ontario beef? The member from Carlisle will tell you that in Ontario we've got incredible beef. We've got lamb. And then Ontario corn, sweet—what do they call that, with the different colours of corn? It's so sweet, Ontario corn. I can't think of the name right now.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: And corn-fed beef.

Mr. Mike Colle: Corn-fed beef. Plus corn—I love eating corn. It's a beautiful thing. And Ontario sweet potatoes—there's nothing like it. Somebody mentioned fiddleheads. What a uniquely Canadian, Ontario vegetable. And then Ontario fish: The member there from Leamington and Essex—why does he never talk about Ontario perch? We've got an incredible little fish. He didn't mention perch when he stood up. He should be ashamed of himself. He didn't mention the Lake Erie perch. If you go down by Lake Erie, folks—I tell the member, go to Erieau and taste perch. You haven't tasted perch unless you've been to Erieau.

That's why we're here, to legislate; we're here to celebrate an incredible Ontario industry and healthy Ontario food, and to make the connection between the eaters and the farmers. Support each other. I love eating Ontario tomatoes, Ontario beef, Ontario goat. Let them eat Ontario goat; no New Zealand goat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm not even certain where to start after this, but I'm going to try to do my best. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence was very, very, very passionate about agricultural products from Ontario, and I'd sure like to invite him up to Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to partake in some of those at some point.

He made an awful number of references to us talking about Alberta beef. The only connection we might make to Alberta is how they slam the Albertans and the economy that we could have out there which could support the economy of Ontario. And if they don't quit doing the things they're doing and putting so many people out of work in Ontario, we're going to have to have them move out there so they can actually get a job, because there's going to be none left in Ontario.

He almost sounded like he had converted to the PC Party there for a little while. He was talking common sense about the impact of the economy on agriculture. I sure hope the part-time ag minister gets a copy of that Hansard so she'll see just how proud some of her caucus are.

He left out little pieces, like how their overburdened red tape regulation has taken the abattoirs out of rural Ontario. How do those people in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound actually get their product to market for the people to be able to eat when we don't have that? Why did they allow the Ontario Tire Stewardship to increase fees to farmers for their tires by up to 2,000%? That seems to have a little bit of an impact on those farmers. I didn't hear anything—he did mention apples, but they could put \$25 million into the apple industry, which would rejuvenate it, and they could supply the whole market of Ontario. They've been to the Liberal table numerous times over seven years. They wasted \$275 million on one gas plant, but they can't find \$25 million over seven years for the whole apple industry.

Then I think I heard him say that there could be something coming with legislation standing up for goats. We need to ensure that we're talking about things that are viable. The agricultural industry is absolutely important to our economy, and we hope you will actually step up and do something rather than talk about it. Walk the talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: According to what I heard from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—and I do appreciate his rhyming off what seemed like the menu for tonight's dinner, simply a focus on what there could be to eat out there. We know what's out there to eat. There's wonderful food and wonderful produce that's available. What we need to do is ensure that the legislation that comes through this House protects that food, not just simply rhymes it off as if, you know, "Look at these wonderful things."

1530

You have federal legislation that is in direct conflict with primary producers in this province, and I have

never—in the days that I've spent in this House—heard a peep out of the Liberal government as to how that detrimentally affects our producers. I have not heard a peep about how the deregulation of packaging sizes at the federal level that are proposed are going to crush the canneries and continue to dismantle those processors. That's something that you could play a role in as a government. That's a voice that needs to be heard on behalf of our farmers. But, yet, not a peep.

Why? Again, because this is a framework. You talked about a framework. The framework that's been built around agriculture has been built around deregulation, opening up the borders to competition, cheap sources of food, that puts pressure onto our producers without any regard. Respectfully, you cannot say that that hasn't happened and continues to happen. We used to have such a wonderful, viable soft fruits industry in this province. That's all gone; literally bulldozed over. Why? Because you've opened the doors to free trade, deregulation and multinational companies that are willing and ready to crush the competition.

Stand up for producers. Ensure that there's fairness in trade agreements. That's the root cause of the issue, and not simply a week dedicated to talking about agriculture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would like to begin by thanking everybody who spoke to this bill.

Food is an issue that all of us can relate to no matter where we live in the world. It's a basic need, and we can all relate to it and talk to it. I rise in support of this bill because this bill is about promoting Ontario food, but it's also about striking that balance. It's about striking a balance between promoting Ontario food and prescribing what ought to be done. So, it is that fine balance and, yes, it is about promoting Ontario food.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence very eloquently painted a wonderful picture of produce that is grown in Ontario. It's produce that I know about first-hand because in Mississauga we have a farmers' market, and I can see the hunger for good, locally grown, fresh food right here in Mississauga, right by Square One. Every year for four months we have the farmers' market, and we have people coming all the way from Burlington to Mississauga. I often ask them—because I'm there: "Why do you come?" They say, "We come here because this is the only time in the brief summer that we have where we can buy food directly from those who produce it as opposed to going to a supermarket." Clearly, here in Ontario, no matter how urbanized we are, we want that connection directly to locally homegrown food, preferably being able to buy it directly from the farmer who grew it.

When I go to the farmers' market I'm always astonished at the wealth of knowledge I learn from those farmers when they explain the different types of carrots. If you take the time to talk to them, it's just so wonderful to learn about the food that you're buying and to have that connection.

This is a great step. It may not be perfect, but I do think it strikes that balance between promoting but not being overly prescriptive. If our food is good and if it's affordable, people will buy it. We don't need to have quotas and targets. That's how I feel. I think we have a great product. We're doing our best to produce it, and I think it's the way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: After listening to the discussion here on Bill 36—just to ask the Liberal government about that old commercial—I think it was a Burger King commercial—“Where's the beef?”

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Where's the beef? Where's the actual substance of this bill?

We hear, from across the way, the Liberals talking the talk, and they're very good at it; I'll give them that. But what they won't do is actually walk the walk. So we have to make sure that this type of legislation, should it move forward, actually does what we do on a daily basis where I come from, and that is, purchase local food items. We do support our local farmers. As mentioned earlier, I am a producer of grains and also beef—

Mr. Bill Walker: And a consumer.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: And a consumer, absolutely.

Here we are once again, listening to this government try to take ownership, if you will, of the agricultural sector. We all know how well that's going for them. They've killed the horse racing industry. They brought in the Ontario tire stewardship program, which is increasing fees on agricultural machinery and tractors.

Mr. Bill Walker: Abattoirs.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: They're inundated with red tape. Local abattoirs are having a very hard time keeping afloat, those who are still around. You want to talk about buying local produce, but you can't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Response?

Mr. Mike Colle: Again, I thank the members for their input: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Essex, Mississauga East–Cooksville and Northumberland.

I just think that there is a time for government criticism and all this kind of stuff. I'm just saying, here, we should all get together and try to redouble our efforts and really talk to the ministers involved to really do an aggressive job at promoting these wonderful producers, the farmers, and the products that they produce in Ontario. We should be positive, because if we keep dragging down this province and saying, “Well, this is wrong; that's wrong”—I say I'd rather spend my time saying the incredible people in this province grow incredible product. I look at the pages. When you go home tonight, make sure what you eat is Ontario-grown. Ask your parents. Ask them, “Does that beef come from Ontario?” If you eat a pork chop: Ontario pork.

I remember when I was at T&T a couple of weeks ago. T&T is one of the largest chains of grocery stores, and they are one of the largest producers of Ontario pork. That's because the new Chinese immigrants who come to

Ontario really love Ontario pork, because they say, “We've never tasted such sweet pork in all our lives than we do in Ontario.” So T&T is a huge consumer of Ontario pork. That way, the pork industry thrives, and that's the way we've got to think.

There are new markets opening up. Look at all the lamb that is now being eaten in Ontario because of some of our immigrants. We've got incredible markets opening up because they know, when they come to Ontario, how wonderful and safe the food is. You don't know what you're getting from garlic imported from China, so when you go to the grocery store, buy the local Ontario garlic. That's what we've got to do: local products, local jobs. It tastes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act.

I must say that as I listened to the debate today, I think that while for some members it's an opportunity to do a dream menu, it seems, there's also a certain amount of conversation about how personally we are connected. I just want to say for the record that my garlic is up. It's about four inches tall, so we're moving along.

On the surface, the Local Food Act seems like a step forward. Unfortunately, there is a contrast between what the government says it wants to do—promote agriculture—and what the government actually does, which is increase red tape and costs for farmers.

Liberal agricultural policies are full of shortcomings, despite the seemingly benign nature of their bills. I'm disappointed that this bill doesn't do more to support agriculture and local food. I understand that to support local food, you need to support our farmers. However, this bill does nothing to address the challenges farmers are facing, such as red tape and regulation and increasing hydro costs.

1540

I attended a round table in my riding of York–Simcoe a few weeks ago and met with local farmers. I continue to hear from farmers that the government imposes policies and programs on rural Ontario and our agricultural industry without understanding what the impact will be.

One issue that was brought to my attention—in fact, it was the first one that the group wanted to speak to—was the question of pesticide use. Fruits and vegetables from other jurisdictions are brought into Ontario and are regulated under a totally different regime, but these products end up on the same plates as the produce grown here. So the arguments that are used, in terms of having a very controlled pesticide environment for Ontario agriculture—ends up on the plate for the consumer with the food from other jurisdictions, which do not have the same kind of regime. Of course, this is a fundamental unfairness for our farmers, who are then not playing on a level field.

The tire tax is yet another example of the Liberal government making it more expensive and difficult for farmers to operate and make a living. Alex Makarenko, a

farmer in my riding, told me that he will have to pay almost \$500 more in taxes just for his tractor tires—\$500 more for a set of tires? Does the Premier really believe that farmers have an extra \$500 to pay? This is even more shocking to me, as the Premier's first stop as Minister of Agriculture was in Bradford, the same place where I met my constituent Mr. Makarenko. It was in Bradford, where she promised, "I have made it my business to get to understand what goes on in rural Ontario and in the agriculture community." Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that the Premier has succeeded in understanding rural Ontario when she makes farmers pay \$500 in extra taxes for tires alone. What will the Premier tax next? We know it will have to be something in order to pay off the bill to cancel the gas plants.

As if the tire tax was not enough, the Liberals' College of Trades will not be any help to farmers. In order to fund this new bureaucracy, the college is forcing new fees on journeymen and apprentices, which will increase the cost of those services for all Ontarians, including farmers. If farm equipment needs to get fixed, farmers need to call on mechanics, or perhaps electricians and technicians, and they will find that they will be paying more for these services, all thanks to the College of Trades, which is making it more difficult for tradespeople to stay in business and making it more difficult for young people to become a tradesperson.

If the Premier really wants to do something about agriculture, she should be reviewing land use planning. With the greenbelt that was imposed on much of the area, the land has been frozen. It will be reviewed in three years. We have isolated pockets of agricultural land where, in fact, agriculture needs a critical mass. You need a critical mass in order to support the secondary services that all farmers need, whether it's a repair, whether it's a dealer for farm equipment, whether it's a veterinarian, whether it's a specialist in feed mills and things like that.

Farmers need infrastructure. In my riding, they need the Bradford bypass just as much as the commuter does.

The horse racing industry is a perfect example of the lack of understanding of how agriculture works. As I say, it's a good example of this government's lack of understanding of the web of connection. In order to drive economic value, you've got to have a seamless interdependence. You can't cut off one part and expect the rest to survive.

Farmers are stewards of the land. They farm where they can with the newest technology: the GPS for determining the right place to put the right fertilizer, the technology on manure containment. These are just two examples.

There are dairy barns where there's a computer system that monitors every cow in that barn. We're talking about high tech, we're talking about good jobs and we're talking about a system that, quite frankly, isn't meeting the needs of our youth to be able to go into farming.

People have mentioned the issues around abattoirs. People want to buy local meat. Well, that option was

taken away a few years ago, and it's one that continues to hamper the ability of people to have small-scale farming and be economic at the same time.

The other thing we need to understand is that the Liberals have failed to listen to farmers. Agriculture and local food stakeholders are very supportive of the concept of the Local Food Act, but Bill 36 outlines much less than what the agricultural community had been expecting. Many of them put forward specific proposals that have not been included in the act.

The Premier even acknowledged that the Local Food Act introduced last fall was weak, and she committed to introducing a strengthened act. But the bill still has no substance, and most of the power in the bill is something that could be done today. She can consult anytime she wants. She can establish goals and targets. There's absolutely nothing to prevent her from doing that.

In the Ontario PC white paper on agriculture, we put forward a number of concrete ideas that would improve Ontario's food system, such as creating a regional food terminal, implementing a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses, and a dedicated fund for the risk management program. The Ontario PCs are the only ones with a plan to help farmers and make life easier. We understand the needs of rural Ontario and the importance of creating a level playing field for all Ontario's farmers.

If we have farmers able to make a living, we will always have farming and farmland. It's most important to consider the value of the right kind of planning that will give farmers the area of land that's contiguous, which will allow them to make a viable economic contribution to this province and to feed us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to put some comments in the debate that has been brought forward today. I think everyone here is in agreement that no one can survive without food, so it's very important that we have a good, sustainable Local Food Act that promotes healthy food, that promotes farming, and that we'll continue to have our farmers as a solid staple in our economy, to make sure we have good, healthy food.

The other element that New Democrats have suggested is that we look at promoting farming as a viable occupation. There are many, many things—the member opposite alluded to the College of Trades. Young people aren't involving themselves in that type of occupation, so that's why the College of Trades did come up and get proclaimed, because we want to have people feel like that is an occupation that's just as elite as any other occupation in Ontario.

We all have a role to play in producing food, in building homes, in having offices provide services. It's important, when we talk about our local food, that we let our young people know that we need them to continue that.

Generations now—our farmers are passing them on from generation to generation. You see the sign, you

know, Stanford and Sons Farms, and “Sons” dropped off. We have to make sure those sons stay in there, and also get our own daughters and sons involved in farming, because a strong Local Food Act in Ontario is extremely important to everyone’s survival.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1550

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It’s a pleasure to join the debate today and to pass some comments on the message from the member from York–Simcoe today, who I think did a very good job explaining—I’m not sure if they are supporting the bill, but certainly she expressed her concerns around the bill, what she thought was right about the bill and what could be improved upon.

Obviously, I look at this from three points: I look at it from the economic aspects of the bill, I look at it from the environmental perspective and I look at it from the perspective of a consumer in the province of Ontario—myself and my family—that is concerned about food security off into the future. It seems to me, if you look at what’s been done in the past with the Foodland Ontario branding and you look at the messaging that was out there—“Good things grow in Ontario”—I think consumers in Ontario, and probably in other provinces and in the States, caught on to that a little bit.

What Bill 36 does, in my opinion, is it takes that further. It makes consumers think a little bit more when they go to the supermarket. When they make those food choices they make every day, they’ll start to look for Ontario-grown food. I have to admit, in the past, I didn’t do that. If you go back into my teens and my twenties and thirties, I probably went and bought the apples that looked the reddest or the apples that were the least expensive. It was actually a friend of mine, who is a farmer down in Vineland, who sat me down one day and explained how the Ontario food and agricultural system worked and why I should be looking for homegrown fruit and vegetables, and other food as well, and that’s something that we continue to do today.

I think the intent of this bill is to ensure that everybody in Ontario is aware that there are huge advantages if we do start to shop locally. If we buy local-grown food, it means good things for consumers, for the retailers and for the farmers themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It’s a privilege to get up and respond to the comments made by the honoured member from York–Simcoe. It’s interesting; she talks about the latest technology, how the farmers have always moved and how the technology has changed. I remember growing up on a farm where having a 29-horsepower tractor—a Massey Ferguson 35—was actually being very progressive, and somewhat limited in what people had. We had one of the larger farms in the area. Of course, once the old farm marketing boards came in, those quickly went to 50, 100, 150; 200-horsepower tractors are the norm at home. They’ve been very quick, the advances in

seed, allowing us to grow corn in areas that we could never grow it in before back in the 1960s and the 1970s.

We hear the government in the House—you mentioned the lack of stakeholder input. You don’t have to legislate or provide legislation that allows you to listen to your constituents. I’m somewhat surprised that you actually put that in legislation. The constituents in this case could be the farmers, the seed producers and the local supermarkets that right now have a very hard time with getting produce that the people actually want to buy. There’s only the one local food supply or fruit supply area, and that’s in Toronto. That’s not very local when you talk to eastern or western Ontario.

We talk about the farmers and their stewardship. What’s good for the soil is good for the crops and good for the farmers. Their values align, so we can trust farmers to do the right thing when it comes to the land.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s a pleasure to stand up and talk about the Local Food Act. I had the pleasure last week of speaking for some time on it—20 minutes last week. There is a lot to say about local food. I think that most people would agree that food connects many people, many communities and many issues across the province.

Last week I focused on the fact that many of the stakeholders who really could contribute and make this legislation really strong had not been consulted. Their voices were not reflected in it, but I understand, in conversations with the government, that they’re willing to be considerate of those voices going forward.

What became very clear, though, in the debate last week is that we truly do not have a vision for food and for the agribusiness and agriculture industry in the province of Ontario, and this is a small piece of it. What G36 actually equates to is opening the door to having a progressive conversation about the importance of food and food systems.

There are some ongoing systemic issues in the province of Ontario, where farmers and those voices from farmers have been very clear that they do not feel supported in the province—the red tape that they deal with, the surprise inspector visits from people who actually are not qualified to sort of pass judgment on what they’re doing. The work before us on the food portfolio is quite profound.

But when you look at the number of farmers across Ontario, that number is falling, and if we’re going to have a sustainable local food production industry, we need to do more to make farming a viable and attractive career option for young people. The education system is a key component of this, and I look forward to expanding on that in future hits.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for our questions and comments, and I return to the member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments of the members from London–Fanshawe, Oakville, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Kitchener–Waterloo.

To the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, I guess where she talks about no vision and the need to have a conversation, I want to get beyond the conversation. The conversation has been going on now for the last couple of hundred years, and it's time to think in terms of the 21st century. It's time to recognize the technology. It's time to recognize the costs and the kinds of challenges that agriculture faces.

I didn't mention that there's the man who has to keep his lettuce cool, and it costs \$8,000 a month on his hydro bill to keep his lettuce cool. And you want to be able to find food locally and cheaply and all of this when those costs are going up, when there's no recognition of, quite frankly, the value. Everybody talks about how much they like to eat, but nobody thinks about how much investment they're going to make in it.

The issue of food security today and being able to feed yourself as a province or as a country is something that we should all be giving some serious thought to. It's the kind of thing that—as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo said at the end of her comments about making farming viable, it's more than just a drive in the country to look at the cows grazing on the hillside. It's about the red tape. It's about the impediments to getting to market. It's about all of those things that come together, that mean that children look at the life of their parents and say, “Who would want this?” We say you should want it. It's time-honoured. It should pay well. It should be a career.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I am glad to join the debate on Bill 36, the Local Food Act. This bill has been introduced in the House by the government as its plan to improve access to Ontario's first-class, locally produced food to the people of our province. When you create a plan, there are details that should be outlined so your plan can be implemented. Sadly, this bill is a plan to formulate a plan.

However, one saving grace of this bill is that it encourages us to talk about the issues of access to locally produced foods and helps frame the conversation. We all know that the new Premier is fond of having a lot of conversation. Here's the problem with that conversation piece of this whole bill: As you've heard from this side of the House already, this bill is light on substance, which makes it hard to criticize. One could perhaps draw the conclusion that it was written this way on purpose. A lack of substance is one way to limit criticism. But, Speaker, on this side of the House, our job is to provide a different perspective so that there's a full, robust discussion about all legislation that is presented in this chamber.

When we talk about food, most of us, if not all of us, agree that everyone needs food to live, and without a healthy, balanced diet, your health can be compromised.

1600

We know that farmers feed cities and that the agri-food sector plays a crucial role in the economic success

of both Ontario and Canada. The agri-food sector employs over 700,000 people in Ontario and contributes over \$34 billion to the provincial economy. We need to pay attention to this sector, and when we are introducing bills in this House we need to get it right. I am proud that the New Democrats have the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane in our caucus. He is a strong voice for farmers because he was a farmer, and he gets why this issue is important, not only to the people who work every day to feed Ontario, but also the rest of us, regardless of where we live.

This bill talks about a lot of planning, but the plan isn't there. I would hope that when this government wrote this bill, it consulted with stakeholders, food producers, processors, retailers and restaurant owners. Of course, the consumer should also have been consulted. If you're going to have conversations like the Premier likes, you might as well have a full scope of conversations.

In 2012, when the Local Food Act was first introduced, the local food week planned to celebrate Ontario food was slated for the same time our farmers would be hard at work planting their crops. How does the Ministry of Agriculture make that type of mistake? How do you celebrate local food without the local food? Marketing 101 says that if you're going to promote a product, you'd better make sure it's available for people to buy. You don't arrange a celebration of local food with the intent of encouraging people to get excited and buy it at a time when the food is not available. If farmers are busy planting their crops, then maybe the availability could be a problem.

Now the bill is back again, and the week suggested is the same week as Agriculture Week. Why is this a problem? Both the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member from Oxford have eloquently described what this means to farmers. But just like the gas plants, the government is more focused on a political solution, what makes the problem go away, instead of addressing the issue in a constructive and meaningful way.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane captures the essence of the problem. Here's what he had to say:

“Agriculture Week is about the people who grow the food. There's a difference—a huge difference. Agriculture Week: It's about a farmer standing in the field in the spring, picking up a handful of soil and deciding whether that soil is ready to plant or not. Agriculture Week: It's about watching your crops wither in a drought, getting blasted by hail and wondering if you're going to make your payments that winter. It's about a combine pulling in and doing the outside round of your field. It's about the feeling you get when you know that that's going to be a bumper crop; that is an incredible feeling, after you've tended that crop all summer. It's about staying up all night and saving a heifer calf from your best cow. It's also about, a couple of days later, losing that cow to milk fever. It's about last Thursday when the farmers had to deal with the ice storm, and for the people who work in agriculture, their first thought was the welfare of their animals. That is Agriculture Week.

“Agriculture Week is looking in the paper and seeing wedding pictures in front of tractors, either big, new John Deeres or old, restored ones. It’s about weddings, births and funerals in little country churches. That is Agriculture Week.”

What we’re hearing from farmers is that this is a big problem, and if you’re not hearing that, you’re not listening.

The bill should also look for new and innovative ways to help all Ontarians have better access to locally grown food. I’ve heard some of the members opposite talk about how their studies show that people are willing to pay more for Ontario food, but isn’t a big part of the problem that we have to pay more for the things that we are growing right here in our own backyard? What are we doing to help our farmers better compete? What are we doing to make sure all Ontarians, not just those who can afford it, have access to great food? Many people face hardships in today’s economy and struggle to make ends meet. Whether you’re paying expensive hydro bills, skyrocketing tuition fees for post-secondary education, paying the insurance bill or just keeping up with everyday life, many people have to make tough choices about the food they buy or, unfortunately, about the food they can’t buy.

Many families are forced to use food banks because life is just too expensive and their paycheques have grown nowhere near the rate of inflation and the skyrocketing cost of everyday living. This is a plan to have a plan. Having a plan should be a starting point, but this bill falls short of reassuring stakeholders and Ontarians that it will deliver a real, workable and sustainable local food plan.

Here are three elements a plan should contain: A plan that describes a path to an end; a plan that describes what done looks like, not only at the end but along the way to done; and a plan that reduces uncertainty, increases understanding and improves efficiency. Sadly, these elements are not in this bill. This bill feels like a haphazard effort by this government. We expect more from this government.

This new government has failed to provide a clear vision and way forward. For New Democrats, just planning to have a plan isn’t good enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to be given another opportunity to speak following my colleague from London–Fanshawe. I heard intently her concern about this week. This week is well documented in terms of when it’s going to begin and its duration.

Coming from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, this issue of raising awareness and promoting eating locally is the right thing to do. Yes, we can tinker and fine-tune the bill when we go to committee, but at the end of the day, the proposed legislation is clearly laid out in the bill. It talks about fostering success and the resiliency of local food economies and the system. It also increases the awareness of local food.

What other way to promote Ontario food than a dedicated week, at least one week in the year, to encourage every Ontarian—they’re already buying locally. But what further reinforcement by having a dedicated week to talk about Ontario food in our schools, in our communities, in restaurants and everywhere.

My colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence talked earlier about a particular grocery store in the Toronto area that has dedicated themselves to selling Ontario produce. That’s a great thing to do. So to reinforce the message of buying locally, we now have a dedicated week to encourage further reinforcement. So, there might be criticism about the bill and what have you; that’s why you can have a committee and go through committee to further vet and strengthen the bill. By being a critic on the bill, we’re not moving this forward, but more importantly, we’re here to do the business for Ontarians.

I appreciate every farmer out there providing produce for us every day. We eat locally and talk about local food, but more importantly, having legislation to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I’m happy to rise and comment on the member from London–Fanshawe. Her statement that farmers feed cities is very true, and the lack of this legislation to have a plan—it’s a “plan to plan,” I think, if I quote her—is very true. It talks about just where this government has gone over the last 10 years and how they’ve affected the agriculture industry with their lack of consulting with stakeholders.

They’re proposing—the member from Scarborough–Agincourt—that they can make changes at committee. I guess they’re looking for good ideas. They’re coming to the right side when they’re looking at the party opposite. But we have to look at this government’s record and how they’ve treated—you know, they’ve killed the farmers markets. It took a lot of pressure to reinstate them—legislation in the last term.

Small wineries are begging for help. I mean they’re surviving in spite of this government. I had the chance to visit a number of them this summer and was quite surprised to see how they’re literally forced to put up small shacks on their wineries so they can have somebody there to sell wine because they have no other way of doing it. To me, that doesn’t sound like the government is trying to encourage growth in this industry.

1610

We sat through a committee and heard from different stakeholders: the issues with cideries, and how they are discouraged from distributing their own cider and are forced to go with international suppliers who are allowed to bargain and offer discounts that they can’t. I hear talk about, “Well, there’s these are free trade agreements,” but there’s nothing that would not allow a multinational to come in and offer a discount that our own suppliers can’t. It almost seems to be anti-competitive.

We’re looking forward to some real changes that would make it affordable to farm in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the member from London–Fanshawe has clearly outlined some of the softer issues—the emotional issues and the cultural issues—of the food industry and the food sector. We have to remember those stories, because they're actually part of our history as a province. I think it's very apparent, as we move forward, that a whole generation is losing touch and actually losing that connection to the land. In part, it has happened very slowly over the years, but even the curriculum in our education system has not been focused on that stream to farming, that connection with agriculture and that acknowledgement that food comes from the environment around us.

I really liked the comments that were made last week around the food systems that are part of the agricultural and rural economy. They're very much connected to the municipal economy. I mean, these are not exclusive sectors; they're very much connected.

Even in the education system, I think this is clearly a missing component. I hope that at committee, once it's supported, we're able to strengthen and put some structure into the conversation around how we can actually support that apprenticeship and career training direction to the agricultural sector.

Those are good jobs. We need those jobs in the future. The rural economy clearly has not felt supported. This is an opportunity, through this piece of legislation, for us to explore some options and be creative. I look forward to that discussion at the committee session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate once again and to express my support for Bill 36. As I said earlier, as a consumer, I obviously don't have a farming background, and I don't believe anybody in my family, at least as far back as I know, has a farming background either. The Flynn family has always been a consumer of food and always thankful that there are good farms around that we can rely on for our food security.

I think there are some great markets in the province of Ontario. Certainly we've got a concentrated population. We've got farmland—we've got some of the best farmland as I understand it. If you go by the Acri or the Agri system on soil, we've got some of the best soil in the country and, I think, some of the best soil on the North American continent. So I think we've got a lot to be thankful for.

As I said earlier, the person who taught me the most about farming and how it functions as a business—as a way of life—was my friend Jack Philbrick, who owns, or did own, a tender fruit farm in Vineland. I know that Jack attended the University of Guelph. He took over the family farm and was able to retire a few years ago. I always sensed that Jack had got farming right. He understood how the process should work; he understood where his market was; he understood what he had to do to make sure that people like myself understood the

importance of buying and consuming Ontario-grown products.

I see Bill 36 as really an extension of the argument that a farmer was making to me that if I, as a consumer, pay more attention to the choices I make when I'm doing my shopping for food for the week, I can actually make a difference; the choices I make at the supermarket and the restaurant can make a difference to the economy of the province of Ontario, to make sure the markets remain healthy and that the farmers who are growing the fruit or the vegetables or the beef or the veal and all the other things grown in Ontario—that that industry remains healthy as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time we have for questions and comments.

I return to the member for London–Fanshawe for her two minutes to reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank all the members for their comments during this debate.

There's a story that actually comes to my mind when we talk about food: It's the grasshopper and the ant. If you remember that fable—I'm sure all of you do, but I'm going to just kind of explain it—

Mr. Bill Walker: Walk us back and—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, it's storytime in the Legislature right now.

The grasshopper was a very vivacious, happy-go-lucky insect, and the ant was a very hard-working—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Industrious.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —industrious insect. It was summertime; it was the time that you're supposed to gather food and make sure that everybody was prepared, because when the bad weather came, you were going to find yourself with a shortage, and that's going to be really bad news.

The grasshopper loved to play his fiddle and dance all summer, and it was just a great time for him. He was all about the fun. The ant was about the work, and the ant was about the preparation, and the ant had a plan to make sure that he had enough food for winter so when the winter comes, he won't have an issue.

The ant would say to the grasshopper, "Aren't you going to be making sure you have enough food for the winter?" The grasshopper would say, "No, no, I've got lots of time," and he'd continue dancing and such. Well, when the winter hit, the grasshopper did not have enough food, and of course the ant had enough food.

We know the end of the story, and we don't want to go to that. I never did tell the children what actually happened at the end of the story, but the lesson was there: The grasshopper had an issue.

This is about planning, and we talked about the lack of planning. It's important that, when we talk about local food, we have a plan so that we can support our farmers and we all can count on that food being there at the end of the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise again for an opportunity to talk about Bill 36. You know, this particular

bill is very important to me, not just because I'm from an urban area, but, more important, very shortly we are celebrating Asian Heritage Month.

I know of nobody in this House and out in the community who doesn't recognize the fact that within the Chinese community, we have more restaurants than anywhere else. Running through my colleagues: the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and his riding; the Minister of Research and Innovation, and his riding; the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Toronto–Danforth, Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough–Rouge River—and my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt—we have thousands of Chinese restaurants across Ontario, and we know that in each of those restaurants, they are buying locally and working with the local producers. I'm very pleased that very shortly we will have an opportunity of further celebration of Asian food, Asian culture. And I forgot my colleague from Mississauga; he has a big Chinese community.

We know that this proposed bill, Bill 36, will further reinforce a message about raising the awareness and appreciation of farmers and their good work out in the community. Very clearly in the bill, it talks about three things. The purpose is very clearly laid out in the bill, the three purposes of this act:

“1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.

“2. To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food.” And I just commented about Asian Heritage Month coming up.

“3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food.”

Let me spend a little time on the third objective of this particular bill. We all recognize that Ontario has one of the safest—and the best food out there in the world. It's second to none. I know that with the growing economy around the world, many of the Asian markets are looking to Ontario for the safe food products, and the fact that we—I know my colleagues opposite can talk about the beef farmers, the vegetable growers and what have you. They're coming to Ontario, folks, okay?

Let me be very clear. I remember meeting, when the former Premier had the various delegates from China—they are looking to our food products here in Ontario, from poultry farmers, from beef farmers, from vegetable growers, and the dairy products, because we have safe food products that we can trust. We don't need to import anything. We're now exporting—one of the largest exporters of different food products.

1620

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased, for the remaining time, to share with Ontarians what we're talking about. Ontario, in terms of food markets, is a \$55-billion industry for farmers, producers, distributors, retailers, restaurateurs, food service operators and agri-food sectors. This is a very, very large, robust sector.

Second, Ontarians like to shop and eat locally. We know from data that over 80% of Ontarians like to shop locally. Every one of us in the House has stood up and

talked about their local farmers' markets or local grocers buying local food, and that's the right thing to do.

This legislation further reinforces buying locally—and not just buying locally; also, encouraging producing locally.

I remember when I was visiting a local elementary school recently. They were looking at building a green space so the young people in the school can have a little community garden. That, again, is the right thing to do. This particular community garden can then lead into the school breakfast program. How cool is that? That's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

This particular legislation is raising awareness. I know my colleagues opposite have raised concerns about this particular week, during the week of Thanksgiving, starting the Monday before Thanksgiving, to proclaim it every year as Local Food Week. My comment here is not to challenge their opinion, but the fact that we need at least—I'm not saying that we shouldn't do more than a week—one week out of the entire year to raise awareness across the province about how great local grocers are, local producers are, local processors are. At the end of the day, regardless of whether they live in an urban area like my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt or live in a rural area, every Ontarian will now have an opportunity to celebrate.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we also know our government has dedicated millions of dollars to support the industry. Through the legislation, it's another opportunity for the government of Ontario to further invest. Right now, since 2003, we have invested almost \$116 million to support local food through marketing campaigns, through promotions such as Foodland Ontario that some my colleagues have talked about, through funding from the Broader Public Sector Investment Fund, through research.

I know when I was teaching, Guelph university had done a lot of research work in terms of making sure we have safe food, ensuring the sustainable food products out there, building capacity—and also, ongoing conversations about food produce, not just here in Ontario, but around the world.

The other piece here is, this proposed legislation also gets other ministries working together. For example, I know for a fact that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has a program dealing with northern fruit and vegetables.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, there's also a local hospice looking at local food produce in the kitchen.

The other piece is the cafeteria procurement process—again, reinforcing buying locally through the local farmers. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, through the Student Nutrition Program, are buying locally. I know this particular program quite well. As a former school board trustee, I know the Toronto District School Board looked towards the local farmers and local producers to get the food for the students in our schools.

Across the board, this particular legislation will help, not just the local neighbourhood, but across the province. This is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece I want to share with the members here is that there are a number of initiatives going on right now, as we speak. I want to do a shout-out to the Black Creek Community Farm. My colleague from High Park would recognize this particular farm. Here in the city of Toronto, we're very proud of the Black Creek Community Farm. Last year, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs visited the farm and did an inaugural event. This particular farm is supported by a number of local agencies such as FoodShare, and is led by a local group called Everdale. It also has other partners, such as York University, through the faculty of environmental studies; Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security; and the World Crops Project; along with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, to make the land available to make this urban farm, so that the young people, as well as the community, have the pleasure of doing urban farming in a seven-acre conservation area in the city of Toronto. Again, it's the right thing to do, that our government continues to support and nurture this kind of initiative. This particular farm also has an intergenerational component. How cool is that, that you have young people working with seniors and seniors providing those historical contexts that some of the young people may not have?

The last piece before my time is up: I wanted to share with Ontarians, but also with my colleagues, the members of the House, that although I live in an urban centre, my family came from a rural area in mainland China. My mother's family was one of the largest poultry producers in a rural part of China. We had one of the largest producers of poultry, and when we in Ontario faced SARS not too long ago, I know that industry was devastated in China. I know, moving forward, our government has led the way in terms of exporting our good, healthy, safe—it has to be safe—food from Ontario around the world. I'm very, very proud of our farmers and every producer out there.

As I end my remarks, I want to encourage everyone: I know we have healthy debate about this proposed legislation, but more importantly, this legislation is about the future, the future of agri-food in Ontario, to make it robust and sustainable into the 21st century. I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to talk about this legislation, and I encourage every Ontarian to have this kind of conversation, whether it's at home, at workplaces, in school or in the community, because there are different kinds of conversations the Premier talks about. Everybody has a voice about food, because we need sustainable food in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to bring some remarks in regard to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. She kind of wrapped up her comments with regard to talking that this bill is going to be the future. I

find it interesting, because they continue to push very strongly and very hard with the Green Energy Act, which is actually taking land—valuable agricultural land—out of production. The last time I looked, the biggest farms that they promote are wind farms, and the last time I looked at that, they did not produce an iota of the food that she's so proud of. I think hopefully they'll take a re-look at that one.

It's wonderful to promote local food. I have the Keady Farmer's Market, a huge farmers' market in my area that attracts people from hundreds of miles around, both producers and consumers. There are small wineries like Coffin Ridge, and yet we can't seem to get legislation that would actually allow them to do more, and it has a ripple effect to the rural economy and the jobs that would be there. I had the Hanover Raceway, and with their idea of cancelling the Slots at Racetracks Program, they basically have annihilated that agricultural industry, which has huge spinoff economic benefit.

You know, it's a lot of talk. I would have liked to have seen—why can't we have a Local Food Week and an Agriculture Week? Why did they have to jump on the back of one that's been there for many, many years, I believe introduced by a member by the name of Bert Johnson? If they really wanted to promote this, why wouldn't it be a daily thing? Why would they not do things that would actually be actions as opposed to a bunch more words and reports? Why wouldn't they come in and do things like cutting energy costs? The margins that farmers make are very minimal to begin with, and they keep adding a burden to them with energy costs. Why would they not cut red tape and regulation? They got rid of almost all the abattoirs across rural Ontario, which again impedes the ability for the local farmer to get their product to market. And these gas plants—there's going to be a billion dollars that are going to be wasted, that's going to be on the back of the taxpayer, particularly that farmer who has very limited margins.

They need to do more. This is just one more example of a lot of hyperbole. Farmers feed cities. We need to have action, not words.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A pleasure to rise and to listen to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. I was thrilled to hear about her family and about local food initiatives. She speaks extremely well. In fact, she speaks so well, you would actually think that there was something to this bill. People who are watching at home would be surprised to learn, I think, after hearing her that this bill consists of only one item, and the one item is to declare a Local Food Week—to name a week. That's all it is. That's it. To listen to her speak, you would think that maybe there would be some parts of this bill that would deal with procurement of government agencies of local food. Why shouldn't we here, for example, procure our food locally, or be required to? Or government ministries, representing millions of dollars of procurement clout? But that's not in the bill.

1630

You would think, perhaps, there was some protection for farmers—other members have mentioned this—around hydro costs, perhaps, or abattoirs or any number of things, but in fact, none of that's in the bill. There's nothing in the bill but to declare Local Food Week. That's it. Not only that, despite her eloquence, the reality is that that wasn't even done correctly, that they made a mistake: They named Local Food Week the same week as Agriculture Week—sadly, biting the hand they were trying to shake, biting the farmer's hand they were trying to shake with this bill.

That's the reality of this bill. All it does is declare Local Food Week. It doesn't help the West End Food Co-op in my riding—wonderful local producers and a co-op that brings farmers in. It doesn't help them one iota. It doesn't help anybody one iota. It simply declares a week.

So for all her eloquence, which was marvellous—please keep speaking—this bill does nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to talk about a couple of companies that I visited in Mississauga. Most people know that I've talked a lot about what a pharmaceutical centre western Mississauga is, what a high-tech manufacturing sector western Mississauga is. But we're also a very large food producer.

I can think of one firm that I visited on a number of occasions, taking a few Ministers of Agriculture there, called Pride Pak. What they do is they take vegetables and put together salad mixes. One of the things that my friends at Pride Pak have pointed out to us is that they have a hard time getting Ontario farmers to grow what it is that they can sell. Part of what this bill does is it tries to connect the people who produce the food with people who are going to process it and get it to market.

For example, Pride Pak is able to supply Wegmans in New York by taking vegetables that it buys in California and out-competing US firms by bringing them across the border, processing them, packaging them, and shipping them back across the border. However, they can't get Loblaw's or Metro or Sobeys or Longo's to buy Canadian. That's one thing that this bill is really going to focus on. When you go into the grocery store and you look at, for example—and I'm going to use this example—next time you're in the grocery store, look at some of those packages of salad mix and see where they come from. They don't come from Ontario, unless you go to a place that you won't normally associate with good Ontario produce, and that's Walmart. Walmart is a big supporter of Ontario farmers. Walmart carries local produce. You know who else does? McDonald's Canada. Both of those really surprised me, but we've got some major US corporations who in fact are bigger advocates than Canadian ones.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments. I think that we all agree that while the notion of

encouraging the production of food in Ontario is a valuable undertaking, this bill falls short by a considerable measure to provide the kind of strength and stability that the agricultural sector needs.

One of the things that is perhaps the most challenging is the question of making sure that the next generation is prepared to become farmers, because of the fact that they look at the manner in which the incredible capital investments that are necessary. When we're talking about tractors that are \$100,000 and things like that, this is a very difficult field—and I use that advisedly—for anyone to get into.

The government fails to recognize in much of its legislation around agriculture that it is the second-biggest economic driver in most parts of the province. You would think that when it provides in so many ways as an economic driver, that it would also demonstrate its appreciation with opportunities for better science and enhanced farming processes to be able to continue to provide Ontarians and others around the world with the very best produce available. So it's in those areas where this bill falls woefully short.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Parkdale–High Park, Mississauga–Streetsville and York–Simcoe for your remarks.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleagues opposite what the purpose of this bill is. It's clearly laid out. But what none of the opposition parties ever talked about to date: The proposed bill is also to strengthen the local food strategy. That includes both legislative and non-legislative components. It also encourages multi-ministries to work together, such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Rural Affairs and other ministries, like the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. At the end of the day, this bill is about awareness and education and also supporting the farmers, the producers, the distributors, everybody, in opening the market—Ontario's food market—around the world, around Canada.

So when the opposition party is spending more time being a critic than actually serving Ontario—because this is what it's all about: Which party is best able to serve Ontarians? Because—

Mr. Bill Walker: Us.

Ms. Soo Wong: No. That's not true. I remember how many of you destroyed the farmland.

At the end of the day, we have proposed legislation to help farmers, processors, food producers to expand their current market, and I know what they've done. I've seen the market out in Asia. They're looking forward to partnering with Ontario. So what this proposed legislation is all about is encouraging that open market and further expanding the market.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very thrilled to be given this opportunity I have for this conversation, and I encourage the opposition party to continue to have a conversation, instead of spending time being a critic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm very pleased to stand today on behalf of the agricultural community in my riding of Nipissing to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I can assure you, Speaker, that our local farmers are every bit as dedicated as any you'll find throughout Ontario.

I'd personally like to thank the local head of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Mark Kunkel; and Klaus Wand, Maurice Schlosser and Michel Champagne, among others who are in regular contact with my office. We continue to discuss various issues the local agricultural sector is concerned with. They are a very proactive group, and I'd like to take this opportunity to commend them for their hard work day in and out.

With respect to Bill 36, my caucus and colleagues and I—we do have some concerns that we hope the Premier will address. Given her track record on transparency with respect to the gas plant scandal, I'd have to say I remain skeptical at this point. But, nonetheless, there is an opportunity here to provide some constructive advice I hope the party opposite will take to heart.

One of the biggest concerns we have is with the plan to replace Ontario Agriculture Week, which holds both tradition and purpose. We do not want Ontario Agriculture Week to be replaced. We believe that Ontario Agriculture Week and Local Food Week should be separate weeks to allow us to recognize both the contribution of our farmers and the importance of local food, including the many people and organizations involved in Ontario's food system.

Secondly, stakeholders and the PC caucus have put forward a number of proposals that would have strengthened our food system, increased access to local food and helped the agriculture sector. We're disappointed that the government has chosen to ignore these initiatives and reintroduce the same weak act as it did last fall.

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Third, Ontario's food system and the agricultural sector are facing a number of challenges, and we are very disappointed that the government has failed to address those in this act. The impact of red tape, hydro increases, and massive eco fees on agricultural tires needs to be addressed, and in some cases reversed entirely.

Before I speak to these points, I'd like to take a moment to discuss the contribution that northern Ontario makes to the province's agricultural sector, which is enormous. I recently had the opportunity—actually, I'll start a little earlier in the story. Some years ago, there was a large group of the Amish community looking to resettle from the northern United States, and they found the most glorious agricultural land in my riding, in Powassan and in Chisholm, Ontario. They had heard there was beautiful agricultural land north of North Bay, and I must admit there is. I know that may come as news to many people here, not thinking about agriculture in northern Ontario, but I'll get to that in a moment. I want to say that the Amish community did settle and have indeed brought many more members of their community

up from the United States. They have truly expanded, to a large extent up and down the Chisholm Line Road and into Powassan, and have really just absolutely changed agriculture in northern Ontario.

I had the opportunity to go a little further north than North Bay, as I mentioned earlier. I went to the New Liskeard Agricultural Research Station with local members of our farm community—again, Mark Kunkel, Klaus Wand and Maurice Schlosser. It was a fascinating tour, and I would like to share some of the interesting facts about the contribution that northern Ontario makes in the province's agricultural sector.

For example, this may come as a complete surprise to you, but fully 50%—half—of all the canola grown in Ontario is indeed grown in northern Ontario, and 20% of all of Ontario's oats are also grown in northern Ontario. From what some of the largest buyers of oats used in the most popular cereals tell us, the best oats that they use are from northern Ontario.

I would also like you to know a couple of other interesting facts. When you buy virus-free seed potatoes in Ontario, every single one of them—100%, every virus-free seed potato grown in Ontario—began in northern Ontario at the New Liskeard research station. When you buy, in the summer, virus-free strawberries, 100% of those virus-free strawberries also began their life in northern Ontario, grown in the New Liskeard research station. These are some interesting little tidbits that I hoped you would appreciate.

Also, let me allow my concern to be shared at this point as well. The previous agriculture minister has given a two-year reprieve on closing the agricultural station and has given us two years to look for private sector partners. I say to the agricultural industry: Let's continue to support the virus-free seed potato and strawberry industry, as 100% of these products come from the north today. Let's continue to support the research on the very specific northern growing conditions, the northern cattle, the 455 cattle that are there in the research division, as well. We need industrial support.

Let me return to the three main points I wanted to talk about. I want to just talk about the provision in Bill 36 that would replace Agriculture Week with Local Food Week. While it's important to recognize local food, we don't believe taking away Ontario Agriculture Week is the solution, so I want you to go to the website respectagriculture.ca and voice your support.

Stakeholders in my caucus have come forward with bold proposals which will strengthen Ontario's agricultural sector. I'm referring to the white paper Respect for Rural Ontario, which provides several paths to prosperity. In particular, path 5 talks about a new Ontario food terminal. We believe there's an opportunity to help our farmers and our processors expand by bringing together more great Ontario food in a new regional food terminal.

This brings me to an additional point with respect to Bill 36, addressing some of the key issues that farmers are struggling with and this government has chosen to

ignore. I'm talking about red tape, regulations that strangle progress and growth in our agricultural sector.

I'm also talking about hydro rate increases. We're facing the more than doubling of your hydro rate on May 1 of this year. That is just absolutely outrageous. It's not just farmers who are struggling with exploding hydro bills; it's all businesses throughout the province of Ontario. I can tell you, as our party's energy critic, the concerns of Ontarian farmers and Ontario's businesses are well known to me. The farmers are amongst those who feel the crushing impact of skyrocketing global adjustment on their bill. In some cases—in fact, almost every case now—that charge is actually larger than the electricity charge on your bill.

Ontario also has a red tape problem, especially in our farms, in our agribusinesses and our food manufacturing industry. There's an astonishing 386,000 regulations that govern our agricultural sector. I want to also talk about a recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that found that 68% of farmers said red tape discourages them and their family from growing their business. They also found that 69% of agribusiness owners say red tape significantly reduces productivity in their business.

Last summer our caucus launched an extensive survey of Ontario farmers, and more than three in four told us that red tape was increasing. We heard the same thing in our agribusiness and food processor surveys.

I'll look forward to hearing the comments from the rest of the caucus members and offering my closing two-minute speech. I thank you very much for these 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the comments from the member from Nipissing. I think I'd like to pick up where you sort of dropped off, on the processing issue, because we've heard a lot of good things from this side of the House about this legislation. I'd like to talk about the potential of it, but one of the key things that I've heard, though, is that the government is proud of the exporting record—exporting our fresh fruits and our fresh vegetables out of province for processing, and then we bring them back in. I'd just like to point out what a huge loss of potential jobs—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member prior.

In fact in 2004 Ontario exported approximately \$2.5 million worth of asparagus, and then we imported it back at a cost of \$1.7 million. In 2004 Ontario exported \$93 million worth of tomatoes, and then imported \$31 million back in. So what we're doing is we are growing the best food, best vegetables, best fruits, and then we're sending them out of province and giving jobs to other sectors.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, it's true. It's a trend. But this is a good opportunity to focus on the importance of keeping food local, and there are good reasons to do so—a lot of them, actually. There are environmental

ramifications for over-exporting food outside of the province. It's referred to as redundant trade. It can be seen in the province as a whole.

One example is that we have much higher greenhouse gases emissions than necessary. This is a fallout from over-exporting the good products that we're growing in the province of Ontario. Actually, from the Region of Waterloo Public Health study: one vegetable traveled almost 5,000 kilometres versus a local one at 30 kilometres. The greenhouse gas emissions are obviously higher when you travel. We can do a lot to keep our local food local, processing it here and creating jobs here in the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond on the Local Food Act and the comments by the member from Nipissing. I want to thank him for his comments and perhaps speak just a little bit in the two minutes about my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, which I will say has an incredibly vibrant, diverse and broad-ranging agricultural sector. In my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, primarily if you go south and west from Thunder Bay and you get into the rural municipalities that are part of my riding—all over Paipoonge, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor and Gillies, the little hamlets, Murillo, Kakabeka and the like—you find a very rich and robust agricultural community, with a very long and storied history, I would say.

There are many organizations in my riding that are very excited by this piece of legislation. The Food Action Network in Thunder Bay has been doing great work for a very long period of time—predating the legislation, I would say—dealing with issues around sustainability, nutritional value and food security, doing some great work in our riding. I'm very proud of that organization, the Food Action Network.

When I listen to the member from Nipissing, we have something in common that I'd like to talk about very briefly. I have an agricultural research station in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan as well. I've worked very closely with them, their director and their board since being first elected in 2003, and they do tremendous work.

I can give you briefly, in the little time I have, an example of something that's come directly out of that agriculture research station. For the first time in the history of Ontario, as a result of the research done at our Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Station, last year or the year before—I believe it was last year—for the first time in the history of Ontario, chickpeas were grown in Ontario. Never in southern Ontario, never in Ontario anywhere—in Thunder Bay, in northern Ontario, chickpeas, a great cash crop and a better yield economically for the farmers. Apparently you can't do it in southern Ontario because of the humidity. It's a very important success story on what can happen in all areas of the province when it comes to locally grown food, and a piece that we're very proud of in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Nipissing who, I believe, shared a lot of good, factual information here today. He really focused on a couple of things that I have to agree with. One of those biggest things—for any business, let alone an agricultural provider—is the cost to do business and the ability for them to actually stay in business, create those jobs on their farm and sell their goods so that they make a living for their family and support their local economy.

Red tape has become enormous—horrendous—under this Liberal government. If they had something in this bill about that, we would have been probably a bit more excited. Electricity: As the critic, these hydro rates that they've actually doubled as of May 1, that has to have a huge negative impact. They always want to talk about the positives; if there were some positives on the other side of the House, I'd be the first person to stand up and applaud them, but it's unfortunate that there isn't a whole lot.

The debt that they have put this province in—every dollar that goes to paying that debt could have been going into something like the agricultural community that would actually create more jobs, create more revenues and actually be a good thing for the province.

The waste of the gas plants: They are going to spend, at the intent of their campaign team, a billion dollars of taxpayer money that, again, could have gone into this, what they're calling a very important industry, and it truly is.

What we'd like to see is some action rather than yet another document that is full of fluffy words, something that says, "may ... establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." If they would come out with legislation that would be talking about reducing red tape, lowering energy costs and improving productivity for our great farmers across this province, then we'd be standing here hip-hip-hooraying, we'd be high-fiving them and we'd be behind them 100%. Something as simple as, why would they overlap the existing ag week with Local Food Week? If they are so keen to promote, particularly the part-time ag minister/Premier, why would they not have made two separate weeks to at least get double the promotion, rather than combining them? It just makes no sense to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. We're in sync: You stand, I stand. We've got good synergy today.

First, I want to say it's extremely important—as many members have mentioned—how relevant the farmers are in our society. There's no disputing that, and they should be given all the recognition that we can, because the work that they do is insurmountable to our livelihood. I want to say that I really have a high regard for farmers, and what they do and what they provide for us.

The other part we talked about that the member just mentioned: jobs. There was an economic impact study

done in Waterloo region. It 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 C\$2.40 in sales and in the local economy. There's the other part of how important agriculture is to our society. They actually generate four times more jobs just by their existence. I just wanted to say thank you to the farmers for all they do for Ontarians and for putting food on our table and making sure that we have access to food.

But as we always say on this side of the House, we can always do better. This bill does have some positives. It opens up the idea that we're talking about a Local Food Act and promoting local food, so we'll give that credit where credit's due. But we still certainly need to strengthen this bill so that it actually makes an impact and so that we see results.

We recognize the hard work that farmers are doing—and making sure we give them the recognition that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With nearly 52,000 farms in the province, more than 164,000 Ontario jobs are generated by the farming sector, providing 13% of the value of the rural economy of Ontario's GDP and \$7 billion in wages and salaries. The agricultural sector rivals the auto sector in terms of its economic contribution to Ontario, and that is not something that should be taken lightly.

Earlier, I was talking about some of the critiques that I had, and I wanted to close by talking about the fact that this bill does nothing to address the massive eco fees this government is ready to allow on the tires for agricultural equipment. The new fees classify agricultural tires as off-road, and the rates range from \$5.88 to \$1,311.24 per tire. No other province has fees even close to the level of those in Ontario.

In closing, I hope this government will take some of the suggestions that we've provided, that both myself and our party and other colleagues have provided, and look long and hard at making improvements to this legislation, because, quite simply, our agricultural sector is too important and we cannot let our farmers down.

In the 20 seconds I have left, I want to say it one more time: northern Ontario. I want you to recognize, for our pages, that 50% of all of the canola grown in Ontario is grown in the north, and 20% of all of the oats grown in Ontario are grown in northern Ontario. That's how important this sector is to our community.

Thank you for the two minutes extra, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to address An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013.

I'm going to talk about the substance of this bill, but I first want to reference that my colleague John Vanthof, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, spoke about this on April 16. I have to say, Speaker, everyone in this House hears a lot of speeches all the time, and unfortunately, we're not

necessarily the best speechmakers the world has ever seen. But occasionally, you come across a speech that's pretty good, that's quite moving; that in fact bears rereading by a lot of people. So I say, if you get a chance to go on the Web: Hansard, Ontario Legislature, John Vanthof, April 16, 2013. It's a good read. It's a very good read.

This bill has some lofty goals and recognizes in its preamble the value of agriculture to Ontario. No question, as the member from North Bay was saying, there is an industry here as big as the auto industry—huge impact on the people of Ontario—an industry fundamental to our existence. No food? No life. It's very, very clear.

This bill, in its preamble, says, "Ontario has robust and resilient local food systems: a highly productive agricultural land base, a favourable climate and water supply...." It goes on to say, "Maintaining and growing Ontario's local and regional food systems requires a shared vision and a collaborative approach that includes working with public sector organizations."

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As you go through the preamble and some of the definitions, it's pretty clear that we're talking about an important sector of Ontario's economy; in fact, a very important part of Ontario society. But when you go to the summary of the bill itself, it's effectively proclaiming that we will have a Local Food Week in Ontario. It says that the province or the minister "may" set targets for local food production and consumption, and that the minister "shall prepare a report" about local food activities every three years.

It is not unusual in this Legislature to have bills come forward talking about great and momentous things and then frankly do very little to address them. Unfortunately, this is one of those bills: far grander than the actions that come from the legislation itself.

When my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke about this bill, he spoke about agriculture in northern Ontario. He talked about what was critical to farmers right across this province and to the people of this province who are fed by those farmers.

One of the things he raised that is a pressing issue for farmers is the whole question of standardized packaging. In fact, if packaging is standardized with the United States, the ability for large American agricultural food processors to take our markets and put food into our supermarkets is dramatically changed. He says—and he's very straightforward—this standardization of packaging with the United States is a threat to Heinz in southern Ontario, and is a threat to food processors who employ thousands, whose products are taken from the land of this province, and that is an issue we have to address.

Let me just read some of what he had to say:

"I'd like to take a few minutes and talk about some other legislation that actually does protect local food, and one of those pieces of legislation is federal, but it's worth talking about. The" Canadian Food Inspection Agency "regulates food packaging sizes in Canada. They won't be doing that very much longer if the Conservative

cousins from our people to the right here have their way, because they want to stop that. They want to stop regulation of everything.... I'm not wild about regulation on everything, but there are times when regulation is a good thing. So because we have regulated package sizing in this country, usually it's packaged in Canada and it uses Canadian products to fill those packages....

"Heinz" in Leamington "is threatened because of CFIA, because the Conservatives are cutting regulated package sizing. And it's not just Heinz."

Speaker, if we're actually going to protect agriculture in this province, we have to look at more than simply declaring a week for local food. We actually have to look at the significant issues that are impacting farmers and impacting food processors, and take steps to protect them. It's as simple as that.

There are provincial regulations in place around supply management. There are some joint jurisdiction issues here with the federal government and the provincial government. But in Ontario, according to my good colleague Mr. Vanthof, we regulate what is milk and what is not milk. In Ontario, if you see a package that says "milk," you know it's milk. But other jurisdictions have something called "milk beverage." People think they're buying a product that's milk but that in fact is manufactured, is a fiction in terms of it actually providing the nutrition and nourishment people deserve from that product.

There's no question that farmers need support, that agriculture needs to be boosted in Ontario and that we need to ensure that the thousands who depend on jobs in food processing have comfort and know those jobs are going to be protected. Frankly, we need to go beyond that.

This bill, as written, is very weak. The one utility in having it pass second reading and go to committee is the opportunity to amend it to actually do more than simply proclaim a Local Food Week. A Local Food Week is not a bad thing, but it's an inadequate thing given the scale of issues that we have to deal with, given the scale of concerns that Ontarians have. Mr. Vanthof referred to this bill as largely a very extended press release, a multi-page press release, a press release that talked in glowing terms about agriculture in Ontario and actually did very little for it.

Speaker, if we're going to send this to committee, if we're going to amend it, let's talk about supporting the processing, the cooking of food in our schools. We've got lots of local food. We have students who need to learn how to feed themselves, who need to learn how to cook, and frankly, in a lot of instances, far too many are hungry. We could teach people valuable skills in our schools. We could feed them, and we could support our farmers and food processors. That's something that we need to do.

We need to work with our hospitals, with our universities, with our municipalities to have them develop purchase connections with local agricultural producers, local farmers, so that the food that they're serving is

fresh, local and, because it's not transported right across the continent, generates far less in the way of greenhouse gases when it's moved from one spot to another.

Mr. Vanthof spoke poetically about farmers, but also spoke about the need to go beyond this very simple proclamation, effectively what's here. He found that the bill was lazy. There's a lot of concern about local food, and so the title of the bill is the Local Food Act. It isn't enough to pass a bill with a nice title. What's needed is a framework that will actually move things forward.

This bill is sort of like a puppy: It's cute, it's hard to hate, but it isn't going to get a lot of work done. We need something a lot more robust, something that can pull a sled, something that can do work. This bill, sent to committee, amended tenderly and gently by the majority of this Legislature, actually could do something useful for this province, Speaker. I look forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I completely agree with one of the sentiments expressed by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth: Let's get this bill to committee. Let's get it to committee right now.

One of the things that we need this bill to do is to be able to connect local producers with local processors. Earlier, I talked about one of the firms that do packaging in our riding. I remember the founder saying to me that in any given year, he's short—and if I remember correctly, it was 10,000 or 20,000 tonnes of iceberg lettuce. He said, "If people in Ontario grew it, I'd buy it." But he has to buy it from California. Why won't Ontario farmers grow what Ontario processors can turn into extra value-add?

Similarly, one of the things that we found in taking a lot of folks from Mississauga out to farm country is that many of them coming from different countries in the world have said, "You know, we normally have to go back to our country of origin to get"—and they'll rhyme off some of the things that are staples of their diet, and many of them have been surprised to discover that not only can they grow them in Ontario, but they can grow them better in Ontario. I'm actually aware of a number of farms that have worked with some of the different ethnic communities to grow products that may be seeded in southern Asia and are in fact germinated, grown and sold here in Ontario. That's the sort of thing that this act aims to do. That's the way that it connects people who have the land on which you can grow the food with the markets that demand a particular product, and processors who can take the food and turn it into something that can be sold. That is the reason I think my colleague from Toronto–Danforth is correct: We've got to get this bill to committee.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I enjoy getting up talking to the fine member from Toronto–Danforth as he talks about this bill and how he's looking to get it to committee and have some input to it.

I got a call from one of my constituents just a few minutes ago, actually, upset with the Green Energy Act and how it's impacting his area—about the consultation, and it's all over for the solar farms that are going on the road that goes by his property. He's really wondering how this is going ahead without any consultation with the township or himself. He's somewhat surprised as he sees this construction going on.

I said that the worst thing is that I know it's somewhat surprising, seeing it go up and the number of acres that are taken out in construction. He made a comment wondering how anybody could call it green energy when you cut down 100 acres of trees to put up this solar landscape—upset with the issue and somewhat further surprised that—

Interjection: Tree farm?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, a woodlot—something that, I think, by most people's standards in this province, is considered green as far as production of oxygen.

I know this government sometimes has no idea of what things cost. I know that sometimes it's cheaper to put a man on the moon—we've heard that from the other side—than to actually worry about—who cares what it costs?

We see that that was the philosophy—who cares what it costs?—when they went through with this Green Energy Act. Now we're starting to pay for it, and we're finding that anybody who can move is moving. Companies are moving to the States; they're moving to Quebec. I guess the US put a man on the moon, and what it cost was not a concern. This Green Energy Act is similar to it. They put this out, and who cared about the cost? But the people of Ontario do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments made by the member from Toronto–Danforth. He definitely has a way with words. He can talk about food; he can talk about the environment; he can talk about energy with great ease.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the education piece he touched on, but I just want to take us back a little bit. This act was actually announced at the international plowing festival, do you remember? It was raining; it was pouring. I guess the government felt it was a good time to make an announcement about food. It was just after the by-election, so people on this side of the House were feeling pretty good. It really did translate well. Talking about local food really resonated very well at that event, and it certainly lifted up the spirits of the people who were there.

I think the member from Toronto–Danforth has accurately pointed out, though, that this piece of legislation does not have a lot of teeth, and we do need to make it better. We need to make it better particularly in one aspect, and that is the connection with education. When I first was a trustee, one of the first school visits I went to was at Lincoln Heights. I went early for the nutrition program. When I got there at 7:15, there were three little

kids waiting to get into the school, because that nutrition program was the only place they were going to get a meal.

We have to remember that being here is a privilege and a responsibility, and we have to make this better. I can understand the defensiveness a little bit, but at the same time, it's incumbent on us to listen to some of the good ideas that are coming forward in this debate. There are good ideas and it can be made better and it needs to be made better, because we have some very serious issues around nutrition, around the quality of food and around the situation farmers find themselves in in this province. The potential is there. We have to make it better, though.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for his comments—Kitchener–Waterloo, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. But Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, oh my God. I'm going to give you a bit of a history lesson on what happened to the electricity sector, because you keep talking about electricity in this House. What happened in 1999 when the Conservatives restructured the electricity sector in this province? A \$38.1-billion total debt. When you take out the payments in lieu and other factors, it actually leaves \$20.9 billion that you guys—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the opposition members to come to order.

I return to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker. So it left \$20.1 billion. At the end of the day, though, \$7.8 billion was put on hydro bills by the Progressive Conservative government at the time, which is still on there as the debt—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to come to order. I have to be able to hear the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I return to him.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker, but I'm running out of time. They put the debt-retirement charge on there; then they artificially freeze the rates. They cap them. They freeze them. Of course the debt goes up. We're still paying that debt off. That was a decision they made. You wonder why hydro—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Northumberland–Quinte West to come to order. I return to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I will give you some extra time because the opposition has interrupted you constantly. Resume.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker. We're still paying the debt-retirement charge. Ontarians are working hard, farmers are working hard, processors are working hard to pay that debt-retirement charge because of a bungled restructuring that your party did, not to mention that you did not invest in the hydro-

electricity system for the whole two terms you were in government. The NDP raised the rates by 40% but made no improvements. We've made considerable improvements to the electricity sector and we're helping all Ontarians, including our farmers.

I don't know why they always take issues regarding the Local Food Act and always turn it around to the Green Energy Act. I think they should remain focused on what we're talking about here. Thank you for the extra time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to thank the members for Mississauga–Streetsville, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Kitchener–Waterloo and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their comments. This bill is a tough one to discuss at any length, because it's pretty thin; I've got to tell you that right now.

Proclamation of a Local Food Week and the giving of a minister powers that the minister may or may not use to set potential or aspirational targets for local food—you know, it's hard to fill 10 minutes. I'm impressed that my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane was able to speak for an hour. He was able to speak for an hour because he talked about the full range of agricultural issues. He talked about the whole province. He talked about life on the farm, and frankly, he did it in very beautiful and flowing terms. He deserves credit for an excellent speech.

When, in fact, we come forward to talk about it, those of us who live in Toronto, our experience is more limited. We recognize, however, his concern that if we're actually going to protect this huge industry in Ontario, this way of life in Ontario, these essentials for our economy in society, we're going to need a lot more than a Local Food Week.

This bill opens the door to what I hope will be very extensive amendments in committee, an opportunity for great debate, an opportunity to get at building a bridge between rural and urban Ontario, using our schools, our universities, our municipalities and the great talent and resources of rural Ontario to build our economy to a much higher level.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill, Bill 36, the Local Food Act. As you know and members know, I represent the downtown urban community of Ottawa Centre. This is a quintessential community in the middle of a city. Today I wanted to bring that perspective to that debate, because too often, I think, the debate I'm hearing is more focused, obviously, on rural communities, on the impact on farmers and farms, which is extremely important. But as a consumer who prefers locally produced goods, I just wanted to bring this important perspective.

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I can say that in my community of Ottawa Centre, there is a lot of excitement around the Local Food Act,

because what people in my community want is access to freshly produced local goods. We're talking about baked goods; we're talking about dairy, grocery products, meats, sweets, and even crafts that are made in a local area. There is great demand for it.

One of the great purposes that I see for this particular bill is creating those markets. It's making sure that these goods that are produced locally by our hard-working farmers get to our cities and get to them in a manner such that residents of cities—where most of the people live, Speaker—can have easy access to the locally produced goods, and I see that the Local Food Act can really do that.

Speaking of my community, there is a huge demand—a huge demand—for locally produced goods, and it's demonstrated in that my riding of Ottawa Centre alone hosts, during the whole summer months, four farmers' markets that have nobody from the outside bringing in resale products or anything. These are all goods that are produced locally, or crafts that are made locally, that get sold at these farmers' markets. I want to talk a little bit about them, because I think they're incredible places. I'm there quite often, meeting community members. I've actually sat at community tables at each of these farmers' markets, and these farmers' markets are just packed with local residents who walk by, bring their family to these markets, meet their neighbours and have some coffee along with some locally produced baked goods. It's an amazing community event where the farmers benefit from the local community and the residents are getting access to freshly produced goods.

The Ottawa Farmers' Market, which is made up of farmers—I have three farmers' markets in Ottawa. Two of them are in my riding: one at Brewer Park in Old Ottawa South, and the other is in Byron Linear Park, which is located in Westboro in my riding. The Brewer Park market will be starting on May 5, going to November 17. The farmers' market in Byron Linear Park in Westboro will be starting on May 18, going all the way to October 26. We're excited. We're looking forward to welcoming our farmers from local communities who are coming and selling these locally produced foods.

I really want to take this opportunity to thank the board members of the Ottawa Farmers' Market for their incredible work in bringing these products: Robin Turner, Andy Terauds, Greer Knox, Greg Leese, Walter Henn, Dan O'Brien, Denise Atkinson, Colin Samuels, George Wright, Jocelyn Garland, and the general manager, Linda Cook—all very hard-working people.

The other example of a great farmers' market in my community is the Main Farmers' Market in the Old Ottawa East neighbourhood, in Ottawa Centre. The amazing thing about this farmers' market is that it was started by the community itself. It was not led by farmers. It was led by the community, because they wanted to have an opportunity to buy locally produced foods. They went to the local Saint Paul University and said, "You have this parking lot which is free on the weekends. Can we bring farmers to sell locally produced

foods?"—a great combination of an urban neighbourhood community coming together and inviting farmers. It has been a success since 2007, when it was started as a pilot project by Sustainable Living Ottawa East, which is a local community group that wants to create, obviously, a sustainable way of living for neighbours. This community board-driven farmers' market has become just an incredible success and continues to grow. Again, a big hats-off to my good friends and constituents like Andrea Norquay, Rebecca Aird, Jamie Brougham, Justin Van Dyk, Ashley Deathe, Kurtis Andrews, David Schubert, and the general manager, Greer Knox, for the great work they're doing in growing the Main Farmers' Market. I think it's starting very soon, I believe in May as well, for the whole season, and we're looking forward to it.

Then we've got the Ottawa Parkdale Farmers' Market, which was established in 1927. It has been going on in my community since 1927. It's run by the city of Ottawa, and it has all kinds of produce that is sold, and flowers and plants—again, a very successful farmers' market which starts around late April and goes all the way, actually, to December 24. They actually even sell Christmas trees and Christmas crafts, which is very exciting for members of my community.

A lot of these farmers' markets, Speaker, are supported by Foodland Ontario, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, by the Trillium Foundation, making it more accessible for the community.

Very quickly, I want to also talk about an organization, Just Food, in my community, which is very much focused on promoting access to local food in our community. They're behind ensuring that we have community gardens in my community. By the way, I've got about three or four different community gardens as well, which I can speak another 10 minutes, easily, on.

But Just Food has been very active in helping shape the Local Food Act, and I'm sure they will be at the committee as well talking about the benefits of local food, and perhaps in fact how it can be even further strengthened. There's nothing wrong in that, in making sure it can be strengthened.

I do want to thank the good people at Just Food for their advocacy in having access to good locally produced foods, people like Cathleen Kneen, Sarah Martin, Dr. Patricia Ballamingie, Marissa Bender, Jason Garlough, and staff liaison Elodie Mantha. Moe Garahan, who is the executive director, is a force to be reckoned with. I know the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell knows she does a lot in terms of advocating access to local food—and the other members of the staff as well for their hard work.

They have a neat program called Savour Ottawa, where they have linked to local restaurants to see if they can create a brand in Ottawa around locally produced goods. Restaurants are now deciding to participate in making sure their menu is made up of locally produced food. The Savour Ottawa sticker goes on the front window of the restaurant, so you know when you walk in a restaurant in my community—be it ByWard Market, in

the riding of Ottawa–Vanier, or in many places in my community like in the Glebe or in Westboro or Wellington West village—that the food you’re purchasing, the great dishes you will be tasting, are produced locally, that the chef has worked with local farmers in getting this produce. It’s a very successful program. Whenever I have tourists who come to town, I always ask them to look for restaurants which are partners of Savour Ottawa, because not only are you supporting local economy, local business, but you’re also supporting local farmers.

These are the kind of activities, Speaker, that really result in ensuring that we have good support for our farmers, who work extremely hard. By having the Local Food Act, which will give even more shape and expression to such ideas as the ones that are happening in my community of Ottawa Centre, I think we will find even greater opportunities for our farmers and, of course, in my case, the hard-working farmers in eastern Ontario.

So I commend the government for bringing the Local Food Act, because I think it’s in the right direction, and from the point of view of an urban riding like mine, we are hungry for locally produced foods. We want those opportunities, be it through our farmers’ markets, be it through our restaurants. We’re looking forward to those opportunities. If this bill can create those markets, can cultivate those opportunities for our farmers and our cities, I think we’re all better off as a province. So I support this legislation, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’d like to make comment on the Minister of Labour’s bit on the Local Food Act. I think the basic thing we need to do in this province is to make sure that our farmers are able to produce the product, to get it to a market in order to keep themselves in business, and also make them strong so they can pass it down to their next generation and keep the generations of farms going and make them strong. Ernie Hardeman has put forth a white paper to focus on decreasing costs, decreasing red tape and allowing one-window access for farmers to dealing with government agencies.

I’d like to take a few minutes, though, to talk about my own local area, of course. A very good idea that started in Elgin county with the school system is, a local farmer decided to approach the schools in the fall and, using fresh produce of the fall—potatoes, garlic, peppers, some apples—have the students sell them, a package of locally grown food, as a fundraiser instead of the chocolate bars and chips and such that goes on. It has been very, very beneficial.

I would think the government should take a look—the Minister of Education is here—at that program. Maybe promoting that would be the best way to promote local foods throughout the province. You can do it in late spring, when we have some berries and such growing. You can do it in the fall, when we have the potatoes and root products that are being produced. I think that’s an excellent idea.

I’ll also make a quick comment to the Horton market that’s available in St. Thomas and has been going on for decades. Something my family does every Saturday morning is go and pick our vegetables and fruit for the week during the summer. It’s an excellent time.

It’s also my time, as an MPP, to get the gauge of people in my community. In my own community. I have the president of OFA—I bump into him, time to time. Last year I had the president of the Home Builders’ Association; I had him talking from time to time. I’ve got the president of SWEA. So I make good use—the farmers’ product is actually allowing me to take care of the other aspects of my constituency at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We’re kind of discussing farmers’ markets, and I feel very fortunate in London that we have huge farmers’ markets, an abundance of farmers’ markets, which just goes to show the need for local food in cities. Those farmers’ markets are very well supported by people coming in every week, every week-end. People enjoy Saturday morning, going for breakfast; I know a lot of people do that. They go for breakfast, and then they go to the local farmers’ market and stock up on all the local foods and meats that they have for the week.

I also wanted to talk about, sometimes with food—we’re talking about how great food is and, of course, that’s a given. But there’s people, a lot of time, who are unfortunate and have to use food banks, or they can’t afford food.

I’m going to an event this week coming up; it’s called the Soup and Bread event. It happens at the Covent market, which is in the heart of downtown London. Last year I went to that event, and what they do is they provide food to people who are on social assistance, so they can’t really afford food, or there are people who are actually the homeless. It’s a homeless initiative by the Homeless Coalition in London. People just come in—it’s held outside, rain or shine—and they are able to take home a bag of groceries.

It’s wonderful that we have a local food initiative happening as well, but we seem to forget that we need to make sure that we have everyone be able to afford food and have access to food. So congratulations to the Soup and Bread event for putting that on and to the Covent market for hosting it. I look forward to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member from Ottawa Centre and thank him for his remarks. I continue to stand and proudly support a piece of legislation that promotes, educates and brings awareness to locally produced food. I don’t think there’s anything that anybody can say of a negative consequence when it comes to that legislation.

It reminds me: When we were young, it was almost the norm, wasn’t it? We didn’t need legislation supporting this kind of thing. I remember when I was young—I grew up in Port Arthur, before Port Arthur and Fort

William had amalgamated, on Crown Street. We thought it was Little Italy, but it was pretty multicultural. I think one in every two or one in every three people, in their backyard, had their own garden. Everybody just did it. I'm going back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Everybody had one.

Then, of course, as young people sort of marauding around the neighbourhood, we used to avail ourselves of the opportunities under the cover of darkness that presented themselves. We'd help ourselves to some of the products that were being grown in our neighbourhood. It was interesting that nobody really mattered or got angry at us for what we did, but everybody did it. It was the norm. Now, here we are, a generation or two later, and we feel the need to almost go back and remind people of the importance of something that came so naturally to us one and two generations ago, so it's a good thing.

There's a piece in the legislation that I'm not sure has been talked about today that I'll briefly remark on that I'm excited about. It has the potential for more tangible benefits for our local agricultural communities. That is this piece that speaks to the working relationship and efforts that we will undertake in terms of this \$25,000 number and trying to get local ministries, whether it's a hospital, a long-term-care home or a school board, to work towards trying to procure local food in amounts of \$25,000 and under. I think there are so many examples in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan—fruits and vegetables and beef and our local cheese farm and local flour mills, and on and on it goes—where those local producers would love that opportunity to plug their local products into ministries and actually show a more tangible benefit from what this legislation can actually do.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's again a pleasure to stand and address Bill 36 here. But again, the member was making remarks about the importance of farmers' markets, and I wholeheartedly concur. However, we have some great farmers' markets in Northumberland–Quinte West, Mr. Speaker, as I know you're aware of. The fine town of Campbellford has a thriving farmers' market, as do Port Hope, Cobourg and Trenton as well. I know farmers' markets are important avenues or venues to support local farmers and the produce.

On the grand scheme of things, farmers' markets are great, but they can only do so much. This bill doesn't do anything, really, to support local farmers from the standpoint that there are many barriers or restrictions, red tape being a huge amount of that barrier, to allowing farmers to adequately get their products to market in a timely and efficient manner.

I would also like to point out that, as a farmer myself, we see and we can appreciate the idea that rural Ontario is obviously the important economic engine that keeps Ontario going. We need to remind ourselves that.

We have to also remind people, particularly the Liberals across the way here, that Bert Johnson introduced it

and passed the resolution and actually brought in Agriculture Week, the week leading up to Thanksgiving and the week that this government would rather bring in their local food item for. I think it's a great disservice to Mr. Johnson and the hard work that he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Labour for his reply.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, London–Fanshawe, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Northumberland–Quinte West for sharing their stories about their local farmers' markets. I enjoyed the debate, because every community is unique. Every community has something interesting in terms of how they are going about supporting local communities, how they're supporting local farmers. It was great to get the flavour, keeping with the food theme here, from everybody.

One of the things that I've been able to do: There's small little entrepreneurs. These two young people in Ottawa, in my riding, actually, in Ottawa Centre, created something called City Crops. What City Crops does is it says that if you have a lot in your backyard, they can borrow it from you to grow some local food. My wife and I have signed up to that, and they come in every week. They've taken a small sliver in our backyard, and they're growing tomatoes and lettuce and all kinds of things. What they do is they give you 25% of the harvest, and the rest of the harvest, 75%, they sell in the local farmers' markets. Here I have, for last two summers, been eating exclusively—our salads for sure are produced right in our own backyard, and there is nothing more delicious than that particular salad. But that's just one example of things people are doing, innovative things. Again, these two young people, I think, were looking for summer jobs. They couldn't, so they came up with this business idea. It's grown. It's really, really grown and I look forward to having them again in my house.

But to know, when I go to a farmers' market, that maybe some of those vegetables were actually grown in my own backyard also makes me feel good and excited.

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The other amazing thing about a farmers' market is not only how the community comes together, but the education you see taking place, where young kids are having conversations with their mom and dad as to where the food is produced and what it means to produce and buy locally. That's what we need to strengthen, and I'm really hoping that all members will support this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I think it's important, to get started, to go back a little bit. I represent the great riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, which is extremely diverse: very urban in south Kitchener, and very suburban and rural, encompassing the townships of Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich. I'll get into that in just a minute. Before

making my way down to Kitchener, I was born and raised in Mount Forest on, in fact, a family farm. I'll never forget those rural roots that I grew up with.

Some may be shocked to know that I, in fact, was born on a farm, but you know what? I'm very proud of having grown up on a family farm. In fact, my family had a fifth-generation Holstein dairy farm—and my grandfather had a purebred Simmental herd—that I spent many a day on. I remember as a young lad, instead of being inside playing Nintendo games and all these kinds of things, we were outside assisting my grandfather, harvesting acres of potatoes and putting them in the sacks and making my way around Mount Forest, selling them to friends, family, neighbours etc. Those are memories that I'm very fond of and will not forget for a long time.

That also includes raising chickens, catching them at the wee hours in the morning and distributing them throughout our community, and selling halves of beef to our family and friends as well. Those rural roots are something that I'm extremely proud of, and I hope someday my son, too, will have the opportunity to experience some of those agricultural roots that I enjoyed when I was younger.

Getting back to my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, a very diverse riding, as I'd mentioned: I think it's first and foremost important to mention that it's the home of St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, a large market that, in fact, runs all year round and is open Thursdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 3:30. I encourage you to make your way out to St. Jacobs for some fresh produce each and every Thursday, Thursday being the cattle sale at the stockyards. I know my dad still goes most Thursdays and has a few Holstein heifers that he sells there, so he does, but on Saturdays you can go out and get your fresh produce. I encourage you folks to make your way out to St. Jacobs.

Also, Herrle's Country Farm Market in St. Agatha: around since 1964, with their specialty in strawberries and sweet corn. I'll be looking forward to that as we near the summer and fall, of course. I wouldn't want to not mention some of our other local produce manufacturers. We're the home of Wellesley apple cider, something I very thoroughly enjoy having in the fridge. I encourage you to stop by there.

Just a few weeks ago, we had the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. Some tens of thousands of people came to Elmira. I know the Speaker wanted to make his way out to the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival that morning but was engaged with some family. But I know he spent many days at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival and will be back. Driving in that morning, I took a picture and posted it on to Twitter: all the local Mennonite manufacturers of syrup lined up along the way to sell their product, and I know many people on their way in grabbed some local maple syrup for this spring. It's something that we enjoy every Saturday morning: pancakes and syrup—real maple syrup, that is.

Martin's Family Fruit apple farm in Elmira—can't miss that one—and of course, Mountainoak Cheese; they had a grand opening just recently—some great local

manufacturers of food and producers of food that are distributed across Ontario and, in fact, North America come from the great riding of Kitchener–Conestoga.

I'd like to spend what little time is left today on the Local Food Act. I know when I go to the grocery store, as many of you—we all have the intention of buying local food. I must commend some of our local stores. I know I heard some comments from the third party about larger grocery chains that don't have local food. When I go to my local Zehrs, I always see Wellesley apple cider there and a lot of local produce that I can get, but I do know that a better job could be done. In fact, the government has a role in this when it comes to schools, universities, colleges and hospitals. They account for hundreds of millions of dollars in food purchases annually, and we need to ensure that those large public sector institutions are in fact encouraged to buy local and buy Ontario food.

So, getting to the bill, unfortunately, I do believe, though, that this Local Food Act really simply is a public relations ploy that the Liberals have put forward here. I read some comments that were made by the former minister after he introduced this bill, talking about allowing the minister to establish targets. In fact, the reporter asked what targets those were and I'll quote what he had said: "Well, we want to encourage the broader public sector and those that we fund directly to look at their food use, look at how they can add more Ontario-made products and get them committed enough to do that. Then they would begin to measure the results and ideally set targets for themselves," and so on and so on.

He continues to explain how those targets will be set by a group after the bill is passed and that in order for the targets to be made the bill must pass, but he really fails to say what those targets were ahead of time. So, I think the common theme that we hear today is, really, what are those targets? Since the government, in fact, reintroduced the bill, farmers, food processors and agricultural groups were really looking forward to seeing their recommendations. I reference the OFA, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, FoodShare—the list goes on and on—about developing a sustainable local food system.

As I had mentioned, Ontarians, whether they're here in Toronto, in my community of Kitchener or in rural Ontario, all have the intent of going out to the grocery store to ensure that they're buying local. But it goes back to a lot of the things that we in fact have heard over the course of the last year and a half. In fact, our critic, Ernie Hardeman, was out heavily consulting in round tables and has recently put forward a white paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, that talked a lot about the struggles our farmers are going through today.

What was mentioned earlier on by our critic, Vic Fedeli, just simply the tire eco tax—I will go back to it because those are costs that unfortunately have to be passed on that make local food more expensive. These folks have to compete in a global marketplace. When the godfather of eco tax, Dalton McGuinty, allows his

cabinet to continue to bring these programs forward and hit farmers with a 2,000% increase just on farm tractors alone, that simply puts them out of the picture. You've got a John Deere combine tire, for example—it used to cost 92 bucks a tire; now it's \$1,644. I mean, spread that over a farmer's crop for the year, and that's extremely expensive.

So, we go on and talk about red tape that farmers are bogged down in. In fact, in a survey done of farmers, 77% of them said that red tape is increasing here in Ontario and that the average farmer spends about 154 hours a year just filling out government paperwork. I know, when I was younger, the better time was spent in the barn and in the field, ensuring that those crops were maintained and that chores were being done, that the cows were being milked in the morning and in the afternoon, not on some bureaucratic binder full of paperwork that needs to be done each and every day. That's simply what our government is bogging down our farmers in. In fact, we've made a strong commitment that we would reduce this red tape by a minimum of 33% in three years, as outlined in Ernie Hardeman's white paper.

I know I've only got about a minute left, so I'll just go back simply to thank the farmers in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I've highlighted many of them who ensure quality, local, good produce is available for our community day in and day out.

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I encourage everyone to get over for the St. Jacobs farmers' markets on Thursday from 7 to 3:30 and on Saturdays as well. Make your way up to Herrle's market. I'm looking forward to their strawberries and sweet corn in the fall. Get some of that Wellesley apple cider in the fall. If you missed the pancakes at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, a local maple syrup festival in Elmira, I encourage you to get out there next year. Whether you're eating a Chudleigh's apple pie or an apple crisp from Martin's family fruits or Mountainoak cheese, you'll think of Kitchener–Conestoga.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We've debated this bill for quite some time, and it's interesting to hear some of the comments from my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga. Our general region of Waterloo really does rely on the farmers from the communities surrounding. The connection between the cities and the rural has to be strengthened, and I don't think that this bill, quite frankly, does anything to do that, although some comments have indicated that it will.

I think it's really important to go back to the fact that there really isn't a vision for agriculture in the province of Ontario, and it's concerning. One of the disconnects, actually, is the lack of support in the education system, which would encourage and which would direct and support students moving into the agriculture sector. Certainly, a growing concern in the province of Ontario, which is directly connected to the health of the children

in our school system, has to do with their disconnect from food. For them to go and visit a farm—those are the kinds of experiential learning opportunities that we need to grow and build on.

There is this one organization in Toronto called Real Food for Real Kids, and it seeks to actually connect farmers with a nutrition program. It's a hot lunch program. It's organic. Kids actually understand the connection with the food that they're eating. It's all vegetarian. In fact, that program actually builds in additional resources so that those kids in the school who don't have enough money to have the hot lunch program get access to nutrition.

The potential on this side of the House to build this into this bill is definitely there. It is certainly our intention to do so. It needs to be better. It needs to be stronger. We look forward to essentially rebuilding it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to take a slightly different tack. When we started debating this bill earlier today, according to Hansard, we had spent seven hours and two minutes on this bill. We now have spent four hours here this afternoon, which means that on a relatively simple bill that everybody agrees with, we have spent 11 hours. I'm sure the people out in television land must be wondering what is with these people on all sides of the House.

What's going on here is a modern version of the filibuster. A filibuster basically is that every member in the House is allowed 10 minutes to speak—some 20, some an hour, if you're the critic etc.—and the opposition simply wants the business of this House to come to a total standstill. That standstill will happen because if you look collectively at all of the opposition members, we can keep this going for 20 to 25 hours. That's what's going on here.

It happened last week with respect to another bill. They put exactly the same period of time and it only came to a vote—I think it dealt with the ambulance situation here in Ontario—after 25 hours of debate. The people of Ontario demand better.

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You can shout all you want, but they would demand better of everyone here. So stop your foolishness. Let this bill pass. Let us go on for second reading. There are all sorts of other bills on the agenda here that we could be talking about that could be dealing with a lot of the other problems that the people of Ontario have.

Opposition members of the NDP and the opposition Tories, this is nonsense. Stop filibustering this bill. Let it pass. Let it go to committee. Let's get on to something else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a more positive note, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga—he's been the member for a year and a half now; he does an excellent job up there. As he described, he has a diverse riding: urban,

suburban—I think much of the Mennonite country up that way. He has a reputation for keeping them honest and keeping them accountable. In fact, he even introduced legislation to that effect. He introduced a private member's bill to bring in some transparency with respect to legislation coming from this government, so at least we know the cost—not only the financial cost, the social cost, but the environmental cost, for that matter.

As we know, Michael was born on a farm. He wheeled into the plowing match last fall on a big, new Holland “Big Blue” tractor. A fifth-generation farm—Simmentals, and growing potatoes, selling potatoes; chickens, selling chickens, catching chickens. You can catch them and you can grow them, but the hard part is selling them.

He talked about strawberries. I don't know if he talked about blackberries, but he talked about strawberries. He made mention of strawberries. And his dad, to this day, sells heifers at the St. Jacobs market.

I'm glad he made mention of peanuts. My riding ships peanuts up to St. Jacobs. We ship them to Elgin. We ship them down to Niagara, at the retail end of it.

Michael is our environment critic. I think every farmer and every farm dealership in Ontario knows the work that he's been doing with respect to these horrendous taxes.

He made mention of the John Deere 9770 combine. To replace the tires, the tax alone would be \$1,600. That's twice what I paid for my last tractor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I know the folks at home watching will want to see my final remarks with regard to this bill.

I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, my neighbour; obviously, my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk—I thank you for your comments; and also the member for Kingston. I will just address some of the

comments he made, because I really do believe some of the comments were a bit rich, I might add.

I know that talking about all this food today has made the member from Kingston awfully hungry, and I know he's in a rush to get out of here to down some of that locally grown Ontario produce and perhaps beef, or whatever. You know what? He is looking a bit hungry, I must add.

But you know what? To talk about the fact that I, as a member, can't stand up and talk about the Local Food Act and talk about comments that I've heard from local farmers, local producers that I mentioned, I really do believe is a bit rich, especially when his government last fall, after tabling this bill, pulled the plug on the democratic process to begin with and cynically prorogued the House because the heat got too hot in the oven—pardon the pun. It got too hot, because there was too much attention on what we now know could lead to a billion-dollar scandal on power plants—pulled the plug.

We couldn't get this bill through the first time. It's a bit like Groundhog Day, now talking about the bill again, because it's back for its second time, but only because his government cynically pulled the plug. Dalton McGuinty couldn't face the criticism and the heat that he was getting here in the Legislature, so he pulled the plug and pulled debate on a variety of bills that are simply just a smokescreen to allow the government to talk about local food when there really isn't any substance, and take away from really the true scandal, and that's the power plants, so—

Hon. John Gerretsen: I think it's 6 of the clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is indeed 6 of the clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
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Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
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Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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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**

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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
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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
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