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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 23 April 2013

Mardi 23 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Tuesday 23 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Please bow your heads.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER PROTECTION
FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT
LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I should mention off the top that I'll be sharing time with the member from Brampton West, who is the parliamentary assistant to my Ministry of Consumer Services.

Last week, Speaker, our government, as you know, introduced the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013. I rose in the House to talk about how we are addressing some key areas of Ontario's marketplace to make it fair, to provide more choice and to boost consumer confidence. I rise again today to stress how we are delivering our commitment to consumers in Ontario.

I spoke in this House last week about how our bill proposes to do four very different things in the area of consumer protection. The first is to curb aggressive, high-pressure, door-to-door sales tactics, especially for the sale of water heaters;

The second is to protect vulnerable, indebted consumers against the misleading and abusive practices of some companies that offer debt settlement services;

Third, to provide stronger safeguards to strengthen the integrity of real estate bidding practices; and

Fourth, to give home sellers more power to negotiate flexible, lower-cost arrangements when using a real estate professional.

Today I'd like to share with the House a few additional details of the reforms. In doing so, I want to emphasize how important it is that we pass these proposed reforms to protect and strengthen the consumer rights of all people in Ontario.

In terms of door-to-door sales—and as I've outlined previously in this House, our bill aims to curb aggressive door-to-door sales tactics and to help homeowners make informed choices. Our proposed new rules, if passed, would:

First, double the existing 10-day cooling-off period to 20 days for water heater sales, providing consumers with more time to consider their decision;

Second, it would ban delivery and installation of water heaters during the new 20-day cooling-off period;

Third, allow rules requiring companies to confirm sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to the customer, and that key contract terms are disclosed in clear, easy-to-understand language; and

Finally, provide new customer protections when the rules are not followed, such as requiring the supplier to pay all cancellation fees when the 20-day cooling-off period is not observed.

I'd like to share with you some examples of why we need to move ahead on these reforms now, examples that, unfortunately, we know are not uncommon in this province. Let me tell you about the case of a single mother in the GTA who works hard to provide a home, food and clothes for her four children. She had just had her water heater replaced a few months earlier when she was visited by a door-to-door salesperson. She was led to believe he was from a company that had just done the replacement and was at her home to check up on the new water heater. This inspector told her that her house was in serious danger of burning down because the new water heater was faulty.

Of course, the single mother became frightened for her family's safety and believed the salesperson when he told her that the solution to her problem was to get rid of the old water heater and have it replaced by a new one—immediately, of course.

Well, you can imagine what happened, Speaker. The inspector was, in fact, from a different company than the one that had done the original installation, and the need for urgent replacement was indeed a hoax. But sure enough, the old heater was taken out and a new one was put in its place—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the members, if they must continue their conversations, that they take them outside. I can barely hear the speaker.

Please continue.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker.

So now this single mother with four children must deal with two companies demanding payment for two different water heater contracts, and this is not an isolated incident. We have all, sadly, read media reports about this kind of thing happening on a regular basis.

The hot water heater salespeople who are looking to take advantage of vulnerable or unsuspecting customers use many tactics to try to secure signatures on contracts. We know that a common trick is to show up at the front door and claim to be from the local municipality or the homeowner's current water heater provider. I've also heard of claims that people are representing the government, which is indeed not the case. Sometimes salespeople say that new regulations have been passed that mean a homeowner needs to replace a heater's venting system to comply or that testing has shown the heater to be using energy inefficiently. Another common tactic is to inspect the heater and claim that it's full of silt, even producing a jar of murky water as so-called proof.

When we talk about questionable practices on the part of water heater companies, these are the kinds of things we're referring to. They are the kind of shady practices that have led our ministry to receive more than 3,200 written complaints and inquiries about door-to-door water heaters in 2012, making this the second-largest source of consumer complaints in the province.

Last week, two of my colleagues in opposition, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the member for Beaches–East York, provided comments in this House about the bill, specifically in the area of door-to-door sales. I would like to address their comments here today.

0910

One of the main concerns expressed was that—and I'll paraphrase here—the 20-day cooling-off period does not protect consumers sufficiently. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry in particular stated, "Once a new heater is installed following the 20 days, if the consumer hasn't sorted out matters with the original supplier, they will face some severe penalties. Cancellation charges can run into the hundreds of dollars, and moreover, suppliers are free to charge outrageous amounts for damages, such as scratches on a 10-year-old tank that is only going to be recycled anyway." While I appreciate the member's comment, I want to respond to this and how it, in fact, misses the point of our proposed legislation.

This bill does not only double the current 10-day cooling-off period when a consumer can cancel a contract with no questions asked, but it also prohibits the installation or the delivery of the water heater. Currently, replacement water heaters are often installed within the 10-day cooling-off period, really going against the spirit of the current rules and making it almost impossible for a homeowner to cancel a contract. Our proposed legislation, if passed, will make it possible simply to cancel the contract if there are any problems with it before the

heater is ever installed. If there are any concerns with a contract, anything that does not seem right or simply a feeling on the part of the consumer that the contract is something they have been coerced or pressured into and do not want to continue with, it will simply be a matter of cancelling it during the 20-day cooling-off period. And if, contrary to our proposed rules, a water heater is installed during that 20-day period, the water heater company, and not the customer, will be responsible for the cost of removing it and all of its associated costs.

Anyone can feel pressured at the door by aggressive salespeople, and anyone can make purchases under pressure that later they realize were ill advised. In fact, many of us read the media reports in May of last year of seven charges of attempted fraud being laid against two men who approached homeowners in Toronto, telling people at the door that they worked for a well-known gas company. These salespersons told homeowners that their water heater needed replacing and, according to reports from the police, they coerced them into replacing them via a signed contract. At least once, unfortunately, Speaker, two victims were assaulted as part of this coercion. So we're looking at a situation where not only do consumers have to be worried about being taken advantage of through dubious contracts; in some instances, their safety is at risk as well.

As I pointed out in the House last week when I introduced this bill, and as I emphasize here for you today, our proposed reforms in this area will, if passed, bring a solution to a very real and pressing problem. And I'm pleased to note that this bill has support. The Homeowner Protection Centre has launched a website at waterheaterdoortodoor.com, where people can send their MPP a note asking that we pass this bill quickly. I want to thank this organization for their support, and I urge all members of the Legislature to pay attention to the many emails that I expect you'll be getting.

In terms of debt settlement, Speaker, I brought to the House's attention last week the fact that some companies that provide debt settlement services in Ontario offer to dramatically reduce a person's debt by negotiating with their creditors, provided that the consumer pays a hefty upfront fee. I stress that for some consumers in financial difficulty, this upfront fee can force them into even more debt. The reason for this is that some companies offering debt settlement services charge high administrative fees and may not deliver on their promised services. These companies can hide behind the hidden contract clauses that reduce or even eliminate the value of the original service offered. Simply put, you think you're getting something by signing one of these contracts, but you are not getting what you expected or what you were promised.

Again, these stories we've been hearing about and reading about are very disturbing, and all the more for being so common. Just last week in the newspaper, a story was carried about a woman in her late 20s, working two jobs in Toronto and simply trying to keep up with the cost of living. She had compiled \$18,000 in credit card

debt and, looking for some relief, she had turned to a debt settlement company that had been advertised on Facebook. These ads are very common, and they all promise in one way or another to help reduce debt and to deal directly with a person's creditors. This young woman paid the company offering to settle her debt almost \$3,800 to help her, and what happened? She found herself facing a lawsuit from the bank she owed money to, and most of the nearly \$4,000 she had paid to the company had been swallowed up by fees. Now this young woman has unfortunately filed for bankruptcy.

Here's another case to consider, Speaker, reported in the Canadian Business magazine: In this instance, a woman nearing retirement age who lives just outside Ottawa had amassed a sizable unsecured debt that had grown to more than \$65,000 in 2011. She enrolled in a 36-month program with a very well-known debt settlement company in late 2012, just last fall. Under the terms of this program, she agreed to pay over \$1,000 a month into a settlement account. For the first three months, all of that money went to service and maintenance fees. For the next 13 months, the plan was for more than half of the monthly payments to go to the company, and more than a year into the plan this woman would have been contributing money mostly into her own savings account. Things never made it to that point, because she was hit with collection calls and court actions before the money she was paying to the debt settlement company ever got to her creditors. By the spring, a large bank to whom she owed more than \$30,000 on a line of credit had garnished her wages. Other creditors were telling her they wouldn't deal with the debt settlement company. This woman left the program, saying she paid \$4,500 in fees in exchange for a few phone calls to creditors and not much else. She ended up paying money she did not have for relief she did not get. Again, this woman has declared bankruptcy.

Our proposed bill aims to help indebted people like this who are some of our most vulnerable consumers in the province. To protect consumers against misleading practices related to some of these services, the bill proposes to prohibit payment of upfront fees before services are provided and to limit the amount of fees charged overall. Both of these limits would be set by regulation. It would also allow debtors to cancel their agreement without a reason within 10 days after receiving a copy of the agreement, and it would prohibit misleading sales practices and advertising. This is a critical point. We have all seen the ads on TV saying that your debt can be reduced by 50%, 60%, maybe 70%. "Pay only pennies on the dollar," they say. Well, we are going to stop them from saying things that are simply not true. If debt settlement companies fail to follow these rules, our new legislation would enable the revocation of their mandatory licences, further protecting consumers from false and misleading claims.

I should say, Speaker, with all of these reforms, our intent is not to target reputable practices. There are many reputable companies out there. Whether we're talking

about door-to-door sales or debt settlement companies, there are unfortunately companies that are not reputable, and this is what I'm talking about today.

The third dimension of the bill is on real estate reform. Ontario's real estate professionals are among the best, and our government has confidence in the effective role of the Real Estate Council of Ontario and the very good role they play in regulating this sector. However, there are some sales professionals who do not conduct their transactions in a way that is particularly honest or respectful of both people looking to buy or to sell a home. As the member for Beaches—East York rightly pointed out last week upon the introduction of our bill, the process of buying or selling a home can be extremely stressful. He describes very well the sinking feeling you get in the pit of your stomach that you've been had when it's all over. Hopefully some people's experiences are a little more positive, but it is a stressful period, when one is making such a large investment. The problem lies in the fact that there are both home sellers and buyers who rely on information about bids that come from the agents themselves and are never really 100% sure about the true nature of the offers that are coming in or, indeed, if the offer has really ever been made. This makes the competitive nature of bidding all the more stressful, as anyone who's ever been a part of it can attest to.

0920

Many of us will have read newspaper reports last summer of some prospective homeowners who were amazed to discover they had paid \$90,000 over the asking price on a Toronto home, even though they were the only bidder. That's correct: These people were effectively bidding against themselves, Speaker, because they'd been told there were two other offers, so ultimately they offered more money than necessary—a lot more money.

We propose to do something about this, and it's a pretty straightforward solution to the problem. The solution is transparency. To maintain public confidence in real estate transactions when multiple bids on the same property are involved, our bill will require real estate salespeople and brokers acting on behalf of a buyer to only present an offer that is in writing. Salespeople and brokers would also be prohibited from suggesting or claiming that a written offer exists when one does not. The legislation would, if passed, also require brokerages acting on behalf of the seller to retain copies of all written offers related to the sale and purchase of a property.

I've had some feedback and some questions about this proposal from people saying, "Well, aren't all of these offers in writing already?" I believe they are, but the difference is what this legislation would allow, and that is that a person who has made a written offer to purchase a particular home could, under this legislation, ask the registrar at the Real Estate Council of Ontario to work with the seller's brokerage to determine the number of offers that were received and to report that number. That's what is different from the current provisions right now.

As well, a separate amendment would give homebuyers and sellers more power to negotiate lower-cost

services by removing the ban on charging both fees and commissions. Allowing agents and brokers to decide how they will be paid makes sense. Why should the government be telling real estate agents and brokers how they can get paid for their services? This reduction in regulation and red tape will better serve consumers and have the potential to unleash innovation and creativity in the sector. This change will make Ontario's real estate marketplace consistent with all other provinces in the country, while responding to a recommendation of the Competition Bureau.

These proposed reforms build on steps our government has already taken to strengthen consumer protection for people in Ontario. Our review of the Ontario Condominium Act, 1998, is well under way, with residents and stakeholders engaged in helping us make the marketplace fairer for all involved. Our engagement process is not only about government listening to owners and stakeholders; it's about members of the condominium community listening to each other. It's about building consensus among different groups who are setting the direction and shaping the proposed changes to the Condominium Act. This way, it is providing consumer protections via a process that's truly an example of democracy in action, Speaker. Our approach is working.

Earlier this year, our government announced its plan to look at qualifications for home inspectors, to ensure that when people make a final key decision about buying a house, they can do so with full confidence that the information about the state of the house is reliable. Again, we're helping people in this province with major decisions about their lives, ensuring that the purchases they make are safe, fair and informed. The Ministry of Consumer Services is working to help consumers better understand their rights and to help businesses understand their responsibilities.

As I mentioned in the House last week, these are the first of a series of strong consumer actions we are taking to make our marketplace safe, fair and one where all people in this province can shop with confidence and make investments in homes with confidence as well. I am confident that these reforms will give the people of Ontario stronger consumer protection, while building consumer confidence in the marketplace. They would ultimately help strengthen the economy of our great province.

I call on all parties today in the House to pass this important bill quickly, so that consumers of Ontario can benefit from the necessary protections this bill would provide.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You're sharing your time?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I intended to, but my parliamentary assistant has unfortunately not arrived yet. Perhaps I could continue until he arrives, if that's okay?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. I know my parliamentary assistant—

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: He's out talking to real estate agents right now, right?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He could be.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We could talk about gridlock, because I know my parliamentary assistant—he's a commuter like I am. I know the challenge of getting here. It can take up to an hour and a half each way every day.

So let me just recap, if I may, and talk about the extent of the challenge for us in Ontario when it comes to water heaters, if I could perhaps give another illustration about how our legislation can address that problem, Speaker. You heard from me earlier the case where the government laid charges this past February against a company that was selling door-to-door heaters. In fact, it laid 63 charges. These charges were laid after the Ministry of Consumer Services received complaints from people in the Ottawa area. The company's salespersons led them to believe they were from the homeowners' current service provider of their water heater. They would come to the home to do their services upgrades or inspections mandated by the government; neither things, in this case, were true, Speaker.

After signing contracts, the customers allege that the company removed and replaced their water heaters only to find themselves being double-billed by the existing provider and a new company. This creates confusion in the marketplace. It does not help consumer confidence. And of course, paying two bills can get very expensive when the customer tries to ultimately sort out what happened. Many of us, I think, if we're honest, do sign contracts and don't read all the fine print. But can you imagine when you now have two contracts with fine print to sort out when it comes to water heaters?

What we're trying to do is help on a number of fronts by doubling the cooling-off period, as I mentioned before. We'll give consumers more time to consider the contract they have signed. If something doesn't seem right, they have twice the time to get in touch with a friend or a neighbour or the Ministry of Consumer Services for advice and see if they have been taken advantage of in similar ways.

Speaker, when I think of door-to-door sales and water heater sales—and some people say to me, "Well, why are people even answering the door?" That's obviously a very personal decision whether people answer the door, and there are many reputable speakers at the door. But this provision to increase the cooling-off time, I think, provides greater protection for all of us. But in particular, when you think about seniors, when you think of new Canadians, when you think of Ontarians where English may not be their first language, I think this additional time is very helpful for people to confer with their family and friends about a contract that they perhaps signed. I think we can all benefit from that additional cooling-off period, Speaker.

The proposed legislation will also prevent a company from hurrying in to deliver and install a new water heater

in the first few days after a contract is signed. I want to emphasize that in the past, companies were able to do this, because they knew once the appliance was installed, it would be very, very expensive for the customer to replace it. Now, by putting the expense of the removal on the shoulders of the water heater company, the company looking for this kind of quick installation will no longer be able to burden the customer with such an expense. It's good news.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Pardon? I think I'm hearing some yays of support, Speaker, from the opposition.

I think, Speaker, my parliamentary assistant would like to say a few words. I'll just give him a moment to get settled and to pick up where I'm leaving off and where I'm about to start, which is to speak a bit more about our proposals on debt settlement.

I will just conclude my remarks by again emphasizing that we are not targeting reputable companies, Speaker. Companies of all sizes in Ontario help drive our economy, but unfortunately some of the bad practices I've identified hurt our economy and hurt jobs in Ontario. Our intent is to strengthen consumer protection, which will strengthen the marketplace and provide more confidence for everyone in Ontario. With that, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise in support of the announcement made by the Minister of Consumer Services last week in the House on the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013. This bill proposes to do four very important things in the area of consumer protection. I would like to offer support through some specific examples of how we're going to strengthen the rights of consumers through the provisions of this bill.

One of the four key aspects of our consumer reform package is our proposal to curb aggressive, high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics, especially for the sale of water heaters. I can personally attest that I have had the experience of these salespeople coming to my door. They look very official, and for a second you almost believe that they're from the local municipality or the city, that they're real and that they're there to check up on how your water heater is working. As a matter of fact, one time I wasn't home and my wife did let them in. I arrived about half an hour later. She didn't sign anything, because I always tell my kids and my wife—and I would urge the viewers that before you sign anything, you do have a right, especially in this bill, where we're extending the cooling-off period to 20 days—you have 20 days before any legal agreement comes into effect. One of the things I can say this morning is that this bill may seem like a small thing, but to a community like mine, where a lot of new immigrants who don't understand English—they see a badge with a picture and often a vest of some sort to portray that they're there from official government

authority. So people do get duped, but unfortunately a lot of people don't contact our offices because they don't know; they think this is totally legal and that this is what they have to do, when in fact that's not the case. I would urge people to contact their MPPs if they have any questions, because we're putting an end to this type of practice of actually bullying people into signing agreements that they don't have to.

Again, we're dealing with water heaters in this act because we have heard from many Ontarians about the problems and the financial hardship they would go through, the pressure tactics that people use to make people sign documents that they don't have to sign. The minister has already detailed the extent to which door-to-door sales of water heaters has been a serious problem in Ontario, and I would like to make some specific illustrations about our proposed legislation that will address this problem. Many of us in the House today have heard the case in which our government laid 63 charges this past February against a company that was selling water heaters door to door. These charges were laid after the Ministry of Consumer Services received complaints from people in the Ottawa area that the company's salespeople led them to believe that they were from the homeowner's current service provider and had come to their home to do service upgrades or inspections mandated by the government. Neither of these things were true. After signing contracts, the customers alleged that the company removed and replaced their water heaters, only to find themselves being double-billed by their existing provider and a new company. The result is confusion on the part of the customer, and of course paying two bills can get very expensive while the customer tries to sort out what happened.

How will our proposed new bill help in this regard? What it will do is fourfold. By doubling the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days, we will give consumers more time to consider the contract that they have signed. If something does not seem right, they now have twice the time to get in touch with a friend, a neighbour or the Ministry of Consumer Services for advice and perhaps to see if they have been taken advantage of in a similar way by the company.

One of the things that's not mentioned in what I said is that they can always contact their MPP, because all three parties have constituency offices. I believe our constituency assistants do a wonderful job, and they're very well trained to make certain inquiries, because often people have difficulties contacting their local government or the ministry, because of a number of reasons. In my area, one of the obstacles is the language barrier, and I'm sure that all of us here—our community staff reflect the face of our community. Once again, I cannot reiterate enough how important it is, not only on this matter but on any other issue that people have questions about: They should feel free to contact the local constituency office of their MPP.

The proposed new legislation will also prevent a company from hurrying in to deliver and install the new

water heater in the first few days after a contract is signed. In the past, companies were able to do this because they knew that once the appliance was installed, it would be very expensive for the customer to replace it. Now, by putting the expense of the removal on the shoulders of the water heater company, any company looking for this kind of quick installation will not be able to burden the customer with expense.

Perhaps most importantly, the proposed new legislation will compel companies to follow up on signed contracts with phone calls to the customer. These calls will have to follow a pre-set script, and it will have to be recorded. So there will be a record of the follow-up, and any attempts to further misrepresent the terms of the contract will be on record.

As well, we propose to require that all key terms of the contract are actually spelled out clearly to the customer in plain and simple language, so that the chance of there being a misunderstanding about what the customer is signing is reduced. The end result would be that Ontario's consumers would have a lot more confidence in considering a replacement to their water heater. If that replacement is actually justified, as the minister has stated several times, having the confidence that they're spending their hard-earned money wisely is something which all Ontarians believe in.

The second key component of our reform package is our proposal to protect vulnerable indebted customers against misleading and abusive practices of some companies that offer debt settlement services. Again, this is a huge issue in my riding and, I'm sure, in many other ridings, especially in communities where new immigrants have come to settle. I speak and understand more than one language, and I listen to the various ethnic radio and TV programming. On almost every radio show or ethnic TV show, I hear advertisements of promises of "up to 75% off your debt, and the remainder of your payments will be very small payments so you can live a happy life and you don't have to worry about anything."

That's very misleading, especially for new immigrants who come to this country in hopes of a good life—in hopes of the Canadian dream. They come and they hear this television ad or they hear this radio ad that 75% of their debt—up to 75%; the misleading fact is "up to" 75% of their debt—can be cancelled, and the remainder they'll be allowed to pay in small payments. It's very, very misleading, and I would urge all people watching this program to be very, very vigilant when they think about entering into these types of contracts, because I can tell you that no finance company or creditor is going to just say, "Yes, we'll give you 75% off if you agree to pay the rest of the 25% in small payments." It's just too good to be true.

0940

The minister has related some instances of these practices and how they have seriously affected consumers in this province, and I would like to share some of the illustrations of how our proposed new bill will help the people of Ontario stay protected against dubious settlement companies.

One of the things I wanted to mention today was that these debt settlement practices often have an impact on a person's credit rating. I'm a believer that once you get bad credit, it sticks with you wherever you go to get financing. Somewhere down the line, if someone is going to give you money, they're going to want to know how honest you are and about your track record of repayment in the past. So that's another very important thing to think about before someone gets into a debt payment plan with some of these fly-by-night people who have set up shop here in southern Ontario.

One of the other things that I have learned as we've worked through this bill is that companies from the UK and the US have come and set up shop, and it's just incredible the type of schemes that they offer to people who are very vulnerable. They're under a lot of stress to meet these payments, and sometimes it's out of their control, because they may lose a job due to a family illness, and they want to get out of this situation. Sometimes you get into a situation where you only want to hear the positive. As human beings, sometimes we block out the negative aspect of what's being told to us. That's also something to keep in mind.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Consumer Services released the story of one Ontario consumer who attempted to work with a company offering debt settlement services to help negotiate an affordable monthly payment program to settle debts of about \$11,000 with his creditors. The debt settlement company said it negotiated a settlement of about \$4,700 and charged the customer a fee of about \$2,500. The company assured the consumer that all his creditors had accepted the settlement offer. One company, however, had not accepted the settlement offer, and the consumer was served with court papers. The consumer contacted the debt settlement company for instructions on what to do next and was provided with a number of forms to defend against the court action. The debt settlement company then sent the consumer an email informing him they had received his cancellation notice. The consumer had never sent the debt settlement company a cancellation notice. Further calls and messages to the company were not returned. The consumer's credit score was significantly damaged, and the consumer approached a not-for-profit company for help. This is a classic case of one of these companies failing to provide the exact services it promised—by dealing with some but not all of the customer's creditors—but still charging a hefty upfront fee.

Our new bill would prevent people like this from having to pay upfront fees to a company on the promise of debt settlement. Furthermore, it would limit the overall amount of fees that the consumer could be charged. It would prevent them from being misled by deceiving advertising, as I said before, Madam Speaker. The ministry is currently in the process of consulting to determine the amount of fees that will be charged, but it will be far less than what is being charged now, and there would have to be a solid rationale for the amount of fees that would be charged.

Furthermore, this consumer would have had up to 10 days after receiving and signing a contract from the company offering debt-settling solutions to cancel the agreement without a reason, and it would prohibit misleading sales practices and advertising. Again, just as with the water heaters, there is a cooling-off period. The consumer does have the choice of cancelling within the 10-day cooling-off period. If debt settlement companies fail to follow these rules, the new legislation would enable the revocation of their mandatory licences, further protecting the consumer from false or misleading claims.

The third aspect of this bill deals with real estate reforms. As the minister stated, our government is confident that the vast majority of real estate professionals in Ontario act ethically and professionally and that the Real Estate Council of Ontario, or RECO, is doing a good job of monitoring professional conduct among the nearly 60,000 realtors in this province.

Our proposed new bill, however, seeks to address the problem of those who work in ways that are not completely above board. One of the ways we would seek to ensure transparency and build consumer confidence is through the introduction of legislation to eliminate the so-called practice of phantom bidding. Sometimes when we are looking for a home, which I believe, for most of us, is our most valued asset—it's the biggest thing we buy, and sometimes we fall in love with a home because of the neighbourhood it's in or because of the attributes of the house; it's been renovated well, and maybe the community or the schools around. So we really want the home. Sometimes you get really passionate about the home that you have looked at and you are willing to do anything. So real estate agents sort of take advantage of, again, the vulnerability. They can pretty much tell that this couple or this family really likes this home and they're willing to pay any price, so they hike up the bid by saying, "Well, there's all these other bids. You better bid above this price, or else this home is going to be sold."

One of the ways we would seek to ensure transparency and build consumer confidence is through the introduction of legislation to eliminate the so-called practice of phantom bidding. We know that about 5,000 of the 15,000 inquiries that RECO received last year came from people who were simply overwhelmed by the multiple bids process when it comes to buying and selling a home.

This process can get all the more confusing when there is a heightened sense of competition around a property. We have heard many stories from hot real estate markets in which people looking to buy a home drive up their offer because they think they need to top a bid coming in on the same property, although these buyers never actually see the offer. This can lead to confusion and the sense that accurate information may not have been shared.

What we are proposing in our new bill is that in real estate transactions where multiple bids on the same property are involved, real estate salespeople or brokers acting on behalf of a buyer would have to present only

offers that are in writing. There would be no more situations where homebuyers have to bid against bids they cannot see. It also means that salespeople and brokers would be prohibited from suggesting or claiming that a written offer exists when one does not.

The fourth aspect of this bill deals with real estate fees and commissions. Our bill, if passed, would allow real estate agents to charge homebuyers and sellers working with them in a combination of a percentage and a fixed amount when pricing their services. Like many purchases we make every day, consumers will be better able to select the service they want while not paying for the ones they don't want. Currently, the province does not allow real estate professionals to charge a fee and a commission for service. Typically, consumers pay for all-inclusive services from real estate professionals through a commission based on the sale price.

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Under the proposed legislation, a real estate professional would be able to charge a fee plus a commission or a combination of both for the services they offer. These services can include staging a home; taking out an ad in a newspaper, magazine or online; or arranging an open house. Traditionally, this has all been part of the real estate professional's commission, but we are proposing to change that to allow the consumer more flexibility in what he or she wants an agent or broker to do. We believe that this move has the potential to unleash a great deal of innovation and creativity in the real estate sector, and it will make Ontario's real estate marketplace consistent with all other provinces. As well, this proposed change responds to a recommendation of the federal Competition Bureau.

The proposed reforms the minister and I have spoken about today build on steps our government has already taken to strengthen consumer protection for the people of Ontario. I just want to reiterate and go over what I've discussed this morning with respect to this bill. It's a very important bill. Sometimes we try and do these big things in this House, but these things are the actual things that people really see and touch every day; for example, the water heater bill.

I can just imagine someone new to the country: They buy a house with whatever money they have spent, they have their first job—not earning very much money—and they come into this very caring and compassionate society that we have. Then, they are duped by somebody, a thug coming to their door and pressuring them to come into their house to do something they don't have to do. Often people are stuck with two or three bills.

I've heard so many horror stories where a significant portion of income for some of these newcomers, and for other people as well—I'm speaking about my riding because there is a huge influx of settlement by new immigrants—a huge part of their family income goes to these shady deals: the phone companies, and the water heaters, of course. The second part of this bill deals with debt settlement agencies. Again, it's another bunch of, I would say, scammers that are popping up with these misleading

ads. I have never seen these ads before, and it's a real danger.

These are the things that push people down, because their credit rating—they give all these promises, and often people don't know what their rights are. Once they are told this happy, good-news story—"It's going to be a happily-ever-after life after you sign these papers"—it's human nature; I know people don't tend to look at the negatives, especially if they don't know the negatives and the impact that a bad credit rating is going to have on them and their families.

These are, I would say, life-lasting effects that these types of agreements have. Of course, I realize that some people do go into hardship because of loss of employment and unexpected expense—illness in the family—and that's why we have laws like this. We're not against people who play by the rules, and that's why we have protection for consumers who do fall into these situations. They can access debt settlement services, but we need these reforms so people don't get ripped off, frankly.

The third aspect deals with real estate agents, where traditionally it's been commissions only, as per the Real Estate Council of Ontario—RECO—but in this legislation we plan to change that to have a service and commission mix. For example, if your real estate agent wants to charge you for the amount of ads that he places in the local paper or magazine or online, or for the number of open houses that he hosts, because if it's a high-end home, sometimes he or she may be required to put a very expensive ad in a national newspaper or an international newspaper, that's something that, maybe, would not be so reasonable when charging a commission. That takes into effect the changes that are occurring because many years ago there wasn't online advertising. Things have changed; newspapers are online. A lot of people don't get their newspaper at their door. Most people read their paper online. So, it's those changes that this bill is taking into account.

Madam Speaker, these are the first of a series of strong consumer actions we're taking to make our marketplace safe, fair, and one where all people in this province can shop in confidence. So, with that, Madam Speaker, those are my comments. This is a win-win for all Ontarians.

Again, I can't express enough in simple words: There are scammers out there; there are shysters. Our office can be your first place of contact because we are there to help you. From all three parties—all MPPs have constituency offices and we have people who work in our offices that I would hope know the community that all of us represent. We can, sometimes, have access to government resources, different ministries, and we can access them much quicker. There is that added effect of a call coming from an MPP's office to a certain ministry where there may be a problem.

So I do encourage consumers to use our offices, use our services. We're there to help you, especially with what has been dealt with in this bill, because oftentimes

people think they can take advantage of you because they think you don't know any better. That can be true in certain instances, but we're there to help, and the ministry is there to help. There are all kinds of other avenues that people can take.

It's my sincere hope—like I said, it's win-win legislation—that all three parties will support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

The member from—I've forgotten—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No big deal.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. Sometimes that's the impression we get from the members in Toronto; they think of the rural areas as "no big deal."

I'm happy to rise to comment on the bill, and we're glad to see this bill come forth. We understand water heater rental was the number two complaint received by consumer services, so this bill is well overdue. I guess that has been a complaint for some time.

We like to see the cooling off period; I think that's a good idea to double it. But we wonder why they haven't gone back and addressed the issue with the cancellation of existing services because we've also heard that that's a major complaint as well, where any company that has existing contracts, sometimes, it's very hard to get out of the deal. They can already be of a long term. One would wonder if the assets have not already been paid off.

Certainly, the debt settlement, you don't have to go very far. You can pick up any paper and see the ads. No question that there are a lot of good companies out there, but unfortunately there are always the ones that we need protection from. I think this bill goes a good way to providing some of that protection, but we also have to go further, and it will be interesting when we give our comments throughout; we'll give some advice to this government, where they might go through committee. We would like to see some of those revisions made to strengthen this bill and protect the consumers out there who sometimes, through no fault of their own, are running into very professional scammers. It can be difficult. We would like to proceed through that.

I guess my time is up, so we'll be looking forward to that time.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Does anybody remember Consumers' Gas? Those were the days, eh? That was a time when we, the government, controlled it, ran it, and it was called Consumers' Gas; and as far as I can remember, there was not one complaint.

Then we got Mike Harris. Does anybody remember him?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: People remember that too.
Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know; I realize. That's why I mention it, because everybody remembers him with such fondness. He decided to deregulate the system, you will recall, which is why we have so many problems, because "We can rely on the private sector to do it better." He created, God bless him, 14 different distributors, each with their own unique way of scamming the consumer. God bless. Mike Harris, he had it right when he was here, and now we're dealing with the fallout of that.

Remember that in January, the Ontario Energy Board started enforcing a new law to curb abuses in the sale of fixed-price energy deals. What did they do after that? Many door-to-door marketers switched to water heaters instead; they moved from one scam to the other. Years later, the government says, "Oh, we've got to close this loophole as well," which is what they're doing today, and we're supportive of that because the Ontario government announced that it will regulate misleading sales of water heater rental contracts, and we think this is a good thing.

There's more to be done; there is so much more to be done. I only have nine seconds and I can't talk about it, but hopefully when we send it to committee, we'll do more—with the willingness of the minister, I'm assuming.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to show my support of Bill 55.

As my colleague from Brampton West said earlier about this particular bill in terms of the high-pressure tactics being used by some of the door-to-door salespeople, in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, we have a very frail seniors' population and also a very diverse community that often calls my office, complaining about these door-to-door salespeople. The challenge here is that the contract—many of these seniors and the newcomers coming to our community don't understand what they're signing.

I remember recently we had a call that the wife of this newcomer signed a contract without knowing what she was signing because she believed the salesperson was selling something good for her home. Little did she know she was going to be stuck and locked into a contract for 10 years with a higher rate than normal. We, through this bill, could help consumers with this particular issue.

The proposed legislation—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Consumers' Gas. Those were the days.

Ms. Soo Wong: That's showing your years, my colleague opposite.

The concern with regard to consumer protection is the fact that the proposed legislation, if passed, will prohibit delivery—after signing the contract, first of all—and extend it 20 days. That's a really, really important piece, because we need to have a second thought after we sign a contract.

The other piece of concern is that the contract must be in clear language. How many times do you see your cellphone bill or another contract you've signed—"What is that?" And some of us are pretty well educated. I have a master's degree in nursing. I can't even understand what they're writing. They must have really good lawyers out there.

At the end of the day, this bill is to protect the consumer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I commend the minister, who's here today, as well as the member from Brampton West. The bill itself, Bill 55, does, I think, address some important issues with respect to the collection agencies that we've heard so much about, as well as the Consumer Protection Act, as well as the real estate brokers act.

That being said, I want to correct the record because the member from Trinity–Spadina spoke—really, he didn't address the issue, but what he did is he tried to impugn motives or impugn something. I think it's important for the viewers of Ontario to recognize that here's the same member who was in the cabinet for Bob Rae that opened up every single contract in Ontario. Now, here's the real issue: He tries to blame everything in Ontario—the real Liberal here was the Premier with the NDP, Bob Rae.

Really, I'm talking about the bill here, but I want to correct the record. It is so false, what he said. I think the member from Trinity–Spadina should get up and apologize because we're talking about Bill 55, consumer protection. The government that almost destroyed Ontario was under Bob Rae, and it was NDP. I want you to stick to the topic and try to tell the truth to the people of Ontario. I wouldn't trust either one of them. They're now a coalition government. That's the issue.

What we should have is a cooling-off period.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity started it. I'm cleansing the record; that's what I'm doing.

Interjection: Cleanse away.

Mr. John O'Toole: Cleansing the record.

Now, I do support many of the initiatives in the bill. I would say the cooling-off period is very important, whether it is against the water heater people who are troubling people across Ontario, or changes to the Condominium Act for that matter or the real estate brokers act on clear disclosure.

But it's unfair for the member from Trinity–Spadina to spoil this debate this morning.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Order.

The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Come to order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Member for Trinity–Spadina, come to order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm happy to do the wrap-up on the discussion about this very important and very exciting bill.

I want to thank the MPP from Brampton West. I really like how he spoke about how this bill, if passed, will support consumers in a real and practical way to deal with the daily irritants that many consumers face, whether it's about the door-to-door sales of water heaters, whether it's about the debt settlement provisions or whether it's about the changes on the real estate side, which includes, quite frankly, reducing red tape and regulatory burden for real estate agents in Ontario. I'm very, very excited about that.

I also want to thank the MPP for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his constructive comments. I hear what he's saying about the need for consumers to be able to cancel water heater agreements. I think it's the 20-day provision, the doubling of that time, that's going to provide more-than-sufficient time for consumers to confer with their families or friends or whoever they need to talk to about these contracts. There's a safety net in there for changing consumers' minds and prohibiting installation of the water heaters.

Also, the member for Trinity–Spadina spoke. Thank you for your comments.

My colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt made some very excellent points as well about why Bill 55 is so important.

This is part of a big package. This is part of a package of consumer protection initiatives that we're introducing. These measures were committed to in the throne speech, so we are moving on that commitment, Speaker. It's about consumers understanding their rights and helping businesses understand their responsibilities. Together, we're trying to create a stronger marketplace, and a stronger marketplace is good for everyone. I don't think anyone is going to disagree with that. I'm confident that these reforms will give consumers stronger protection in Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Miss Monique Taylor: It is my great pleasure to welcome my dear friend Jimmy Moffat to the House today, from the sheet metal workers. Welcome, Jimmy.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce two constituents from the great village of Thorndal: Linda Ross and Rachel Ross. Thanks for coming down today, and have a great day.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to introduce Matthew Ahrens, who's the brother of Jason Ahrens, a page—Matthew is a former page, as well—and his grandmother, Ann De Roia. Please help me welcome them to the House today.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I, too, am more than delighted to welcome my constituent Ann De Roia, who is the grandmother of both Jason and, of course, of Nicholas Raponi De Roia, from Ottawa South. We have quite a family gathering here today in the Legislature. We're thrilled that they're all here with us so that they could listen to this wonderful question period we're going to have.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome some constituents to the House today: Lynn Saunders, Margaret Casey, Leanna Foster, Maralynn Beach and Janet MacDougall. Maralynn Beach is a resident of Leaside; it's the 100th anniversary of Leaside this year. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Melissa Kargiannakis to the gallery today. She is a constituent of mine and a passionate advocate of health and improving health care. Please welcome Melissa.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I am delighted to introduce Ali Riza Güney, consul general of Turkey for Toronto; Hüseyin Nurgel, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Umit Eruysal, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society; Yaman Üzümeri, external vice-president of the Turkish federation; Mehmet Bor, past president of the Turkish federation; Yıldız Ünsal, treasurer of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation; and Feruzberk Khueaykulov, executive director of the Turkish federation.

I also invite all my colleagues to join us this afternoon for the Multicultural Children's Day reception in committee room 230 between 12 and 1 o'clock this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Before I begin, Speaker, I want to say on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus: We want to give our thanks to the RCMP, Toronto police, York, Peel, the OPP, CSIS and leaders of Toronto's Islamic community for thwarting the terrorists' plot and to keep Ontarians safe.

I have a question for the Minister of Finance, based on his remarks yesterday to the Economic Club—just a quick, direct question to the Minister of Finance.

Minister, in your speech, you said you were going to hold the line on taxes, and then you talked about increasing new revenue tools. Can you please distinguish for us the difference between a revenue tool and a tax?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What I said yesterday was the following: We have been able to beat our targets by \$5

billion. Our deficit projection is now \$9.8 billion. We're exceeding targets, for the past four years running, and we're doing so because of the extensive measures of restraint that we've implemented and because of the co-operation we've had with our stakeholders to ensure that our public services are not only protected but that they're also sustainable and affordable. More importantly, we are generating a degree of revenues through some of the incentives that we're providing to increase—more production, more business investment, more job creation, and that is what's helping our economy recover in a very pragmatic and a very stable environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I got an answer to my question. I asked the minister, very simply, to distinguish between—on the one hand he says he's not going to increase taxes, and on the other hand he says he's going to bring in what he called new revenue tools, which to me sounds like the same thing. It sounds like a tax increase.

Let me make this point, Minister: For some time now, the Liberals, under Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, have focused on increasing taxes, revenue tools—whatever you want to call them. You increased business taxes; you cancelled personal income tax reductions; you brought in the health tax that you said was going to save health care; you brought in the HST to say that you would use that to balance the budget, and now we have among the worst deficits in the history of the province and the largest one in Canada; you brought in the eco taxes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—exactly with the number of taxes they brought in.

A quick question, Minister: Why should we trust you with one penny more when you blew all that money and dug us into a deep hole?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario is now the lowest-cost, lowest-tax jurisdiction in North America. We are the most competitive in North America to attract business investments. We have reduced taxes; we have inspired companies to invest.

It shocks me that the members opposite—their solutions to the problems and the difficulties and the sensitivities of our recovery—what are they saying? “Cut even more.” We are the lowest-cost jurisdiction per capita for public service anywhere in Canada. We've done a good—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So we'll stay the course. We're going to continue investing in infrastructure, we're going to continue investing in those incentives and those initiatives to attract more business, and we are going to protect public service. We are going to protect health care and education. We are going to protect those things that make

us competitive. We're not going to fall prey to a slash-and-burn policy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I go to final supplementary, the member from Northumberland will come to order.

Carry on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

I listened to the minister very closely, and he said that Ontario is the lowest-cost and lowest-tax jurisdiction—in North America, I believe you said. Minister, you know that doesn't meet with the facts, and I hope that you'll put more thought into preparing this important budget than you do to the speaking notes that you seem to have before you. The budget is absolutely crucial.

Let me make this point again: You've tried the route of increased taxes to fulfill runaway spending—in fact, reckless spending; it's up by 70% under the McGuinty and Wynne Liberals. You also said that you're going to stay the course, but I ask you, if increasing taxes and runaway spending have given us the biggest deficit in Canada—they have put 600,000 people out of work in Ontario today, and our growth rate is actually slowing down—doesn't it tell you it's time to take a bold new course, go off in a new and different direction and get Ontario growing again?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are in fact one of the most competitive jurisdictions in North America. Around the world, people are competing for those investments, and Ontario is the third-largest jurisdiction in North America to attract foreign direct investments, and we're succeeding. We're succeeding in creating 400,000 net new jobs since the recession. We're succeeding in providing the stimulus and the growth necessary.

It is critical that we remain competitive. That is why our corporate tax rate and our personal tax rate will remain at the low levels that they are now, and we will not at any time find ourselves in a situation where we're going to put the people of Ontario at risk by taking on some of the issues that they've proposed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But there is something that the Leader of the Opposition did say that is critical here. He says this budget is crucial. This budget is critical. This budget should be read and it should be looked at, and that is when he should make a decision.

We have a good plan, Mr. Speaker.

1040

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course, the role of the finance minister is a critical role that calls for the highest levels of competence and command of the facts.

I say to the finance minister, you've not been able to distinguish between revenue tools and new taxes. You keep changing your view on where we rank on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—focus on those basics, it shakes my confidence in your ability to move us towards balance or to get our economy growing again.

Let me give you a very simple proposition. Under the McGuinty and Wynne Liberals, government spending has gone up by 70%. It's actually a remarkable and reckless increase in spending. We still have a massive deficit. If you actually freeze spending today, if you don't increase spending overall, you can balance the budget within two years.

Minister, why not just take a very simple, direct approach: Freeze spending today, and we can balance the budget in two years and get our economy growing again.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have been extraordinary in keeping our spending growth below 1%. We have maintained a co-operation and a collaboration with our stakeholders to achieve zero-zeros throughout our deals. We've enabled ourselves, together with all parties, to ensure that everyone is doing their part.

I agree: The most important and critical thing that we can do is eliminate and tackle the deficit by 2017-18, and that's the path that we're on. We're taking all the steps necessary to invest in our youth and to invest in infrastructure and to invest in our health care and to invest in our education.

These are the things that are going to give us long-term competitiveness. These are things that work, and these are things that we'll continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me see if I follow the minister's arguments. He said—and it is a line in your speech from yesterday—“The most important and fundamental thing that we can do, together, to secure our future prosperity is eliminate the deficit.” You just basically used that line word for word. But then, Minister, you announced three new spending initiatives—I think you said in infrastructure, you said in training, you said in something else.

If you say you're going to balance the budget and then you announce three new spending initiatives, how in the world are you actually going to accomplish that unless you truly plan to increase taxes yet again on the backs of hard-working Ontario families and businesses?

Let me give you another approach. Why don't you just stop the scandals like the gas plants, stop the scandals like Ornge and eHealth, and hold somebody accountable? And then, Minister, again, if you hold spending as it is today, built on a 70% spending increase, you can actually balance the budget in two years. If it's your top priority, why don't you take that path and balance by 2015?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It seems that the member opposite isn't prepared to invest in the people of Ontario and in roads and bridges, in infrastructure, in those very issues that provide for business growth and economic renewal.

That is what we're doing; that is what we will do. We have the courage; we have the plan. We have what's necessary to provide the hope and opportunity for the people of Ontario. It's not about more government; it's about more opportunity. It's not—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Chatham, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's not about cutting for the sake of cutting. It's about transforming and ensuring that those public services are maintained at a lower cost. That is what we're doing, and we will continue to do so.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Because of decisions that this minister, Premier Wynne and Premier McGuinty and the Liberals have made, we now have over 500,000 of our friends, our neighbours, our family members who are out of work and losing hope. We're doubling our debt. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The minister's only solution seems to be to spend more, to delay balancing the books, and then increase taxes.

Let me illustrate the threat of debt here. We celebrated the other day—my colleague from Conestoga mentioned Benjamin Leone, Rob's son, born into this world. He was born with a \$20,000 provincial debt on his back. Before the Liberals came to power, that was \$11,000, so you basically almost doubled the debt. What do you say to young people today when you're putting \$20,000 of debt on their backs and then some, when you don't balance until 2017? Why are you putting your inability to make decisions today onto the backs of the next generation? Don't we need to go in the opposite direction and build a stronger—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear. We know that the Conservative government federally has not been able to meet their targets. They continue to have increased debt and increased deficits when they had huge surpluses. Other jurisdictions and other provinces have also had difficulty, given the slow growth, meeting their targets.

Ontario has been very pragmatic—

Interjection.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And I'll have a seat, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think you will.

The member from Chatham will come to order—second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you.

Ontario has been very clear that we are going to balance our books by 2017-18. We have been strategic and very pragmatic, doing it in a gradual way and in a way that will continue to inspire growth and greater prosperity.

We also want to be fair. We want all Ontarians to benefit. No one should be left behind. We want to ensure that everyone's at their best. This budget will do just that.

I hope the member opposite will read it, I hope the member opposite will give it consideration, because it's the right thing to do.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have been clear since the throne speech that if we're going to support a budget, it has to create jobs, it has to strengthen health care and it has to make life more affordable.

There are families with loved ones waiting as long as 262 days for home care in this province, and that's unacceptable. We've put forward a simple proposal to ensure a five-day guarantee for home care, and if the government finally keeps its promise to cap CEO salaries in the health sector, it won't add a nickel to the deficit.

Will the Premier commit to that today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party. I have been quite clear both in our private meetings and in this House that we had identified some areas that we wanted to work on, and many of those areas are areas that the leader of the third party has expressed interest in.

One of those is investment in home care. I've been very clear that we're willing to work with them and make sure that we make the investments that are necessary so that people get home care in a timely way. It's extremely important to families that they know their loved ones are going to get the care they need and they can stay in their homes as long as they want.

I have been very clear that that's an area we want to work on with the third party. I hope we'll be able to do that between now and the budget, but we will be making investments in home care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's a simple step that would improve our health care system and add certainty to people's lives in a very difficult time.

The government talks about targets and goals that they already have in place, but families know that far too often, people fall through the cracks and are left waiting hundreds of days on waiting lists that have stretched these days now into the thousands. Is the Premier ready to commit to a guarantee? Is she ready to commit to a guarantee that people waiting for home care won't be waiting more than five days?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I am committing to is consistent and ongoing improvement in our health care system. I think it's extremely important that political leaders make commitments that are doable, that are

achievable, that we not throw out numbers in a way that's irresponsible and then are not able to meet those goals.

I think it's extremely important that we understand what's doable, that we make investments that will improve health care, that will in fact, as the Minister of Finance said, transform the way we deliver service, because we know that as people age, we are dealing with a whole new demographic and a whole new reality about how service needs to be delivered.

We're going to continue to make investments, but at the same time, we're changing the way those services are delivered to make them better.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People waiting for home care want to see that guarantee and they want to know that that guarantee is funded fairly. Will the Premier finally enact the hard cap on public sector CEO salaries so that we know that the dollars will be invested in front-line care for patients, not executive compensation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the spirit of what the leader of the third party is talking about, but the numbers don't match. In fact, the money that needs to be invested in home care goes far beyond any savings that would be acquired by capping CEO salaries. I think that is an issue that needs to be addressed.

But the bigger issue is that people need to know—you're right—that they're going to get the home care that they need, that they're going to be able to stay in their homes. They also need to know that if they need care in their home from a physician, for example, that's going to happen, that they will have a house call, that they'll have a home visit that will allow them to get the care that they need. Those are the kinds of transformations that we're going to make, Mr. Speaker, because that is what will make health care better. That's what will transform the system and will make it capable of dealing with the aging population that is coming down the track at us.

1050

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd just like to remind the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek that I'll offer some help today if he needs it.

New question.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, although I'm quite disconcerted that I didn't hear a yes to hard caps on salaries, nor did I hear a guarantee of five days for home care. It's quite disconcerting.

What people want to see in the upcoming budget though, Speaker, is something that's concrete. They want to see real results. They don't want to see a government that they've seen time and time again fail to deliver on the promises that they make. That's the reality, unfortunately.

Elba wrote to us. She lives in Toronto, and she wrote this: "I think that the waiting for home care services is

[so long] on the hope that people will drop dead while waiting....

“[It’s] very terrifying becoming older, weaker and sick in this country. I won’t have someone like myself to fight” for me, “as I did for my husband.”

Women like Elba need to see a real guarantee that they won’t be waiting longer than five days when they need their home care. Will the Premier commit to Elba and others to a five-day guarantee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’m just going to make a general comment. I’ve talked about the need to improve home care, and I’m very committed to that, but I want to make a comment about the budget process. It is extremely important to the people of Ontario that the people in this Legislature take this very seriously. This is not a political game. This is not a Ping-Pong game where you’ll put out a policy, and I’ll put out a policy, and we’ll see which one we can fight about and where we land. That’s not what it’s about. It’s about looking at our current situation. It’s about looking at the global economic situation. It’s about staying on track and being fiscally responsible. It’s about making the critical investments that the people of Ontario need so that their province and their services can improve over time and so that we create the conditions for growth. That’s what this budget is about, Mr. Speaker. It’s not that it’s a Liberal budget; it’s not that it’s an NDP budget or that it’s a Conservative budget. It’s the right budget for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think it’s about the fact that these are tough times for the families of this province. That’s what it’s about. They’re being asked to pay more, and they see cuts being made to their hospitals and to their health care system. That’s what they see.

Irma in Toronto had a loved one receiving home care and writes, “Based on my experience I would say that the government was wasting far too much money on management and not spending wisely on ensuring that their clients were getting good care.”

Will the Premier guarantee that money goes to the needs of patients and take the simple step of capping CEO salaries in the coming budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course I will guarantee that money is going to go to the service of people in the province and particularly in the area of home care. In fact, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, the Minister of Finance and I are going to be at a community service organization in north Toronto, in Minister Hoskins’s riding, this afternoon. It’s called SPRINT. It has been delivering services to people in their homes for decades. In fact, some of the ideas for transforming the way we deliver service—i.e., making sure that people get their services at home, making sure that doctors are available to people in their homes—come from the organization that we’re going to be visiting this afternoon.

I am committed to implementing those changes. The Minister of Health is working on those. That’s the transformation of the system that I’m talking about that will make it sustainable over time.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People have told us that they’re looking for change—simple, affordable change—that makes their lives better. They’ve been promised it over and over again but constantly find that they’re being asked to pay more and expect less from their government.

New Democrats have been clear since the throne speech: If we are going to support a budget, it has to create jobs, strengthen health care and make life more affordable for Ontarians. Will we hear a commitment from the Premier today that she will cap executive salaries and ensure that people waiting for home care will have it in five days, guaranteed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party will hear, in the budget when it is read, a commitment to improving the lives of people in Ontario. She will hear a commitment in those areas that she has identified because those are areas, Mr. Speaker, that we had identified as needing work: youth unemployment, improvement of home care and making sure that people have the services that they need in a timely way.

But we will not be held hostage to an arbitrary list. I have said many times that I am happy to work with the leader of the third party, and we are going to do what’s in the best interests of the people of Ontario, in the areas that she has identified and beyond.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. The amnesia continued this morning at the justice committee. We did get a little insight into the Oakville negotiations from your predecessor’s policy director, Sean Mullin. Read into the record was testimony that the government was committed to “make TransCanada whole.” There are at least 10 references to that. That could cost \$1 billion. That’s a far cry from the \$40-million number the Auditor General told us is unrealistic and yet you cling to. Former cabinet secretary Shelly Jamieson told us last week that there are “buckets of costs” for Oakville.

Premier, tell us today about the buckets of costs for Oakville.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member mentions the witness this morning. Again, Mr. Speaker, I can’t help it that the Conservative Party keeps calling witnesses that don’t answer questions the way they wanted to. It reminds me of their first witness. My favourite was their first witness. They called the former Speaker of the House of Commons. I read from the Toronto Star: “Tory Witness Bolsters Liberals’ Case to Clear Chris Bentley of Wrongdoing.”

In terms of the Oakville situation, I think the honourable member is aware of two things. The first is that the Auditor General, an officer of the Legislature, is looking into the Oakville gas plant as directed, as asked, by the Premier, in an effort to provide transparency. The second thing he knows is that his party was front and centre in opposing that gas plant.

We look forward to testimony from candidates in that riding, candidates that we've asked to come forward who have not yet made themselves available. We look for his help in asking for those witnesses to come to the forefront.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My gosh, Bob Fosse could not have coordinated a better dance routine than that. Premier, all the public wants to know is: How much did the Liberal scandal cost, and who ordered the documents to be withheld? Weeks later, we still don't know the real cost.

It's clear that every Liberal staffer brought before the committee is putting their party's needs ahead of the interests of the taxpayer. Not one Liberal is telling us the whole story, Speaker. What we do know is that the Premier's office, along with cabinet, have directed this scandal from the very beginning. We do know that there was absolutely no regard for the taxpayer. The objective was to do a deal at any cost, Speaker.

I ask you, Premier: Will you end this charade and come clean on the Oakville costs?

Hon. John Milloy: These are oldies but goldies. The member from Halton, Hansard, June 1: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." The member from Halton, press release: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? I'm asking the minister to consider moving this plant." The member from Halton told the Toronto Sun on October 7, 2010: "It was sad that it took so long for the government to listen to the people of Oakville ... it was nice to see that decision overturned."

Mr. Speaker, again, where is the Conservative costing? We asked for Conservative candidates, from both the Oakville and Mississauga areas, to come forward, along with the New Democratic Party candidates. None have made themselves available. I asked the honourable member to use his influence to have them come forward and talk about the work that they did, the analysis to cost out what it would cost to cancel the Oakville plant. We are looking forward to that testimony as we are the Auditor General's report.

1100

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the more we learn about the private power deals that your government signed, the more we see that these deals were great for private power companies and lousy for the people who pay the bills. This morning, the former Premier's senior energy adviser wouldn't or couldn't

tell Ontarians why private power companies were getting to shape the province's electricity plan.

Can the Premier explain why TransCanada got a heads-up on the province's energy plan before this House was informed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I actually appreciate the question that was being asked about the whole issue of siting power plants in this province. It is something that the government, in co-operation with the opposition, have expanded the mandate of the committee to look at. I think it's about time that we stop going on these fishing trips and that the committee actually starts to look at how we could move forward, because the simple fact of the matter is that that honourable member represents a party that was equally opposed to the Oakville plant, as was the Progressive Conservative Party. All parties in this Legislature were opposed.

We recognize that there were mistakes made. I think it would benefit all of us if the committee focused on how to move forward and how to come up with the right decision-making process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Boy, you can't even deny this stuff anymore. Premier, people expect the electricity system to provide affordable energy for this province so families can pay their bills and so businesses can afford to grow. But instead, the government is promising private power companies that they can see the energy plan and make sure it helps them out before the province sees it.

Can the Premier explain why private power companies are coming ahead of hard-working families and the creation of jobs?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the honourable member fails to acknowledge his party's record on the Oakville situation. It was identical to all the rest of the parties. The member himself said, "I don't agree." He told Inside Halton, "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant, I don't think it's necessary."

The member from Beaches–East York, on December 2, 2010, said, "I'm glad the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

There is unanimity of all parties in terms of what happened at Oakville and Mississauga. I think we all welcome the honourable member, his colleagues and all colleagues of the Legislature if they want to use this committee as it should be to come forward with recommendations on how we move forward in future decisions. That is the mandate that has been given to the committee. Unfortunately, they spend a lot of time on fishing expeditions when they should be looking at the broader policy questions.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. On

April 12, a final political hurdle was cleared towards building a second bridge span across the Detroit River. President Obama gave his presidential permit, widely considered the last approval required before we go forward. This is indeed very good news, to have the White House's support. Can the minister now tell us what this bridge is going to mean for Ontario's economy and jobs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly thank my colleague for this important question. As Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, I'm very pleased to see that President Obama has endorsed the new Detroit River international crossing.

You may not know this but more than \$110 billion in goods cross the Windsor border each year, making this North America's premier trade crossing. Ontario exports 77% of the goods that we produce here to the United States, and almost a third of that travels across the border into Michigan. More efficient crossings mean better access to US markets for Ontario manufacturers, helping them to grow and to thrive.

North America's auto industry sees millions of vehicle components crossing the border every day to ensure their just-in-time delivery to assembly plants in both Michigan and southern Ontario. While the bridge itself is a federal initiative, the province is doing its part by building the \$1.4-billion Windsor-Essex Parkway to link the new crossing to the 401.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm glad to see that Ontario businesses and families, particularly in Windsor and southwestern Ontario, will benefit from the new Detroit River international crossings and the increased access to the United States market.

The truth is that the United States will continue to be a very important trading ally for Ontario, but we've got to look at new markets because that's where the world is growing. Can the minister tell us what the ministry is doing to help Ontario businesses access new, fast-growing markets outside of North America?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member is right in indicating that we need to look at new markets, not simply existing ones. Last year, the efforts of my ministry and our government helped over 1,000 Ontario exporters access or expand their export markets through participating in our programs. For example, over 540 Ontario companies participated in 69 different international trade missions to places in Europe, South America, Asia, the Middle East and North America. Since 2007, just in that period of time, we've led 37 international minister-led missions and eight Premier-led missions to destinations around the world to promote Ontario business. The most recent mission, of course, was to China in January. It resulted in the signing of nearly \$800 million in contracts for Ontario businesses.

Here in Ontario, we provide consultations, seminars and many other supports to businesses looking to expand globally. When Ontario companies are looking to expand

globally, our government will be there to offer whatever assistance we can to help them grow their businesses.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Last week, your parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy compared the Liberal gas plant scandal to the USA putting a man on the moon. He said the US never knew the cost of putting a man on the moon and that your government never knew the cost of cancelling the gas plants.

In the wake of those ridiculous comments, we've uncovered a few factoids. Did you know that the average cost of launching a space shuttle, according to NASA, is around \$400 million? If we use NASA's math, which is far more trustworthy than the Premier's math, for the same price of three shuttle launches to outer space, you can save three Liberal MPP seats.

Premier, do you share Bob Delaney's view that Charles Sousa's, Laurel Broten's and Kevin Flynn's seats are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to wait for quiet and definitely remind members that this is becoming too frequent. I'm going to remind members that they are to use their titles or their ridings. It's the spiral down, so I'm going to stop it. From here on in, if I hear that, I'll pass the question.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the specifics in the supplementary, but I just want to say that the decisions that we made to relocate and cancel the gas plant projects in Oakville and Mississauga were decisions that were supported by every member of this House, by all parties. We listened to the communities. We made the decisions to relocate those gas plants, and there were costs associated with that. The reality is that when projects have begun, there is a cost associated to making a change.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that it's very important that I have been the Premier who has asked the Auditor General to look at those costs, to make sure that the calculations that are made are open and transparent. That's why we asked the Auditor General to look at it. I look forward to his report. In the meantime, I think it's great that the committee is able to broaden its mandate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Premier, you have repeatedly stood in this House and promised on the record that you will appear before the justice committee to answer for your role in this massive scandal—it's galactic, the level of the scandal. Next Tuesday you've been invited to appear before the justice committee. Will you confirm to the House today that you will order and instruct your staff to not play calendar or scheduling games? Will you keep your promise and confirm your appearance at the justice committee investigating the gas plant scandal on Tuesday, April 30, 2013? Yes or no? Are you coming to the committee?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I can say quite unequivocally that the Premier will be in attendance at the committee.

I want to address the main issue that he asked in the main question. He referred to the cost of relocating the Oakville plant. I want to read from a letter that I delivered to the Clerk of the Committee yesterday afternoon:

“At the meeting of the justice committee on Tuesday, April 23, 2013, Liberal members intend to bring forward a motion requiring the Ontario Power Authority to appear at a meeting of the committee.

“Our commitment is to be open and transparent. To support the work of the committee, the OPA will be in a position to share their current estimate of longer-term costs and savings associated with the relocation of the Oakville plant.

“As you know, the government also has asked the Auditor General to report on the Oakville relocation. The auditor’s work with the OPA is currently under way, and we look forward to receiving the auditor’s final report.”

Mr. Speaker, we are being open—

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

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Yesterday we heard from one of the hospitals affected by the diluted chemotherapy drugs. Windsor Regional Hospital, like all of the affected hospitals, used an approved procurement process to source these drugs. Yet at committee, a hospital official said they were “under the impression that some safeguards had been put in place.” Speaker, there is ample evidence that the minister knew about this grey area of oversight for years. Can the Premier explain why the ministry failed to do their primary job of oversight?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question, although I must say I’m a bit surprised to hear that question. I think it is abundantly clear that when I became aware of the issue of underdosing of chemotherapy drugs, we acted within days.

We have heard that Health Canada has been aware of this issue for many years. I think that as we work together to take the steps necessary to assure patients that they do have access to the right drugs, we will be working with Health Canada. I am delighted that last week they announced that they are actually acknowledging that there is an area that needs attention. Regulations that we’ve announced will take us in the direction we need go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier. Ontarians want to know what happened, but they want also to be assured that this kind of lapse in oversight will never happen again.

I’m really concerned that the ministry seems to be unwilling to acknowledge that they failed to provide oversight. They’re unwilling to acknowledge that they even had a role to play. Will the Premier admit that a mistake was made by her minister and explain what is being done now to address other unrelated areas in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, once again, am happy to say that when we became aware of this issue we took immediate action. We pulled together all of the partners. There is no question that the health care system is focused on addressing this issue. You heard from the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital; you heard from the chief of staff at Windsor Regional Hospital. Yesterday they appeared. They are focused on ensuring that this does not happen again. We also have Dr. Jake Thiessen, who is working on the whole cancer drug supply.

I would hope that the member opposite would be listening to what her critic in Ottawa is saying, the questions that are being asked in Ottawa of Health Canada. We have shared responsibility here and we are acting together to resolve the issue.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, it can be tough at times to balance and to care full-time for your children, your aging parents, or both. Recently, I happened to read an article in the Globe and Mail that focused on this very issue. It profiled a young family, the career and personal sacrifices that they needed to make to ensure that their loved ones were properly cared for.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can the minister tell us, what can the government do? How can the government make the life of Ontarians who are caring for their loved ones a little easier?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for a very important question. This is a very important issue and something that I think all of us hear about from our constituents on a frequent basis. We have heard from sole caregivers; we have heard from those who are in the sandwich generation, who are looking after their elderly parents and their young ones at home, as to what we need to do in order to help our elderly parents or other family members who may need help.

That’s why we have put forward a piece of legislation that, if passed, would build on the existing family medical leave to provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job leave for employees to provide care and support to a family member with a serious medical condition.

In addition, that legislation, if passed, would complement recent federal initiatives that provide leaves and benefits for parents who need to care for a critically ill child, or in cases where a child is missing or dies as the

probable result of a crime. This is an important issue, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. The introduction of the Leaves to Help Families Act is good news for Ontarians.

This version of the bill builds upon the previous version by adding in extra leaves that complement the new grants and the unpaid leaves offered by the federal government.

I think that every member of this House and everyone who is watching us today shares a common experience. We're all sons or daughters; we have parents and grandparents; we may have spouses and children. In short, we're all part of a family. When those family members have a major health problem, we want to be there for them.

So through you, Speaker, to the minister: Can the minister update us on the status of this bill?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This is important, Speaker. This bill is important because it will give working Ontarians the one thing they need most, and that is time to be with their loved ones. I really hope that all MPPs will support this bill. This bill is first and foremost about compassion and making sure we know that our families are doing well.

The debate has commenced on this important bill, and what I have heard so far from the opposition members is heartening to me. I quote the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, who said that the government has come back "with a better bill, and of course they do deserve recognition for it." I thank him for those positive comments.

It's similar for the honourable member from Essex. He said, "I think it's well intentioned. I think it's something that is almost what we would call a no-brainer...."

I hope we will continue with the sentiment, get the debate done in this House and send this bill to committee so that we can move on providing these important care leaves for families.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, while your government has been lost in space, 600,000 men and women are looking for work in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario.

On the Mississauga power plant, you blew your own number by 45%, and now Ontario businesses and families are stuck paying your bill.

Premier, do you think it's right to force Ontario businesses, families, and the 600,000 men and women you have put out of work to pay for your political dirty work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, you can start with paper—I've got a press release here, or a comment in the Mississauga news, and it quotes—listen to this: "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Ave."

Then you can go to the Twittersverse: "An Ontario PC govt will stop the plant for good." Then you can go to YouTube and watch the Leader of the Opposition, surrounded by his adoring candidates, in front of a crowd of five or six people, saying if he's elected, this plant will be "done, done, done."

The Progressive Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party—all of us had the same position in the last election. Again, we're looking forward to hearing their—

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

1120

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General doesn't get the last word; I do.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: That was a heck of a lot better than Michael Jackson's moonwalk, actually.

The Auditor General told us one thing and the Liberal Party is telling us something totally different. What is clear is that political decisions were made, decisions that served to benefit only the Liberal Party of Ontario and are ultimately going to cost Ontario businesses and Ontario families upwards of \$1 billion.

Yesterday your government announced that you will table your budget on May 2, and we can only assume that the NDP, your farm team, will be dutifully supporting it. Premier, what is the final number you're going to write beside the words "Oakville power plant cancellation cost"?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Auditor General in terms of the Mississauga plant, and the Premier asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville plant.

We are still waiting to hear about the Progressive Conservative numbers. In fact, just in reference to an earlier question, we have asked that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hudak, come before the committee next Tuesday, where he can discuss his figures. I hope that the honourable member will ensure that he doesn't play calendar and say that he's too busy to come before the committee, because we're looking forward to his testimony to explain his opposition to the gas plant and how it would be "done, done, done."

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Neskantaga First Nation declared a state of emergency, looking for provincial assistance with a suicide crisis that has rocked the community. The community attributed these suicides to the social conditions in the community, including prescription drug abuse,

poor water quality, inadequate policing and lack of access to mental health and addiction workers—issues that the province has been aware of for years.

My question is simple: Does the Premier believe that First Nations need to declare states of emergency to access the basic health services that they need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course I do not believe that First Nations communities need to declare states of emergency in order to get services. I had the opportunity to speak with Chief Moonias at the time that the emergency was declared to make sure that Emergency Management Ontario was aware, to make sure that everything we could do we would do to deal with the particular circumstances.

I know that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has also had a chance to speak with the chief. We will need to work with our partners, as is always the case in these situations, because the federal government, the provincial government and First Nations communities always have to work in partnership because these are shared responsibilities.

We are very much a part of that, and we are doing everything we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Neskantaga is not the first community to declare a state of emergency; it is only the latest. In 2009, it took the pressure of the NDP to get the Ontario government to commit funding for a Payukotayno First Nation suicide prevention program. Yet last year, the same government cancelled \$1.7 million of that funding, leaving the community without supports.

Each and every community across the Far North is dealing with similar challenges, and as the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Premier knows this well. Will the Premier commit today to address the social conditions existing on all First Nation communities, or does every community need to declare a state of emergency to get basic help from your government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am so committed to improving the lot of the people who live in First Nations communities.

These are complex issues that are rooted in a history of which all of us have to share some shame and blame. We have not, as a society—it doesn't matter what party, it doesn't matter what level of government—always worked in the best interests of the people whom we share this province with. Whether it's First Nations education or whether it's First Nations health care or whether it's the infrastructure on reserves, I am committed to working with my colleagues, to working with the federal government, to working with the First Nations communities to make sure that we address these complex issues.

We have done more to build those relationships and make sure that services flow to First Nations in the last 15 years, and we will continue to do that work.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation.

This government recognizes the importance of collaboration and partnership. It is often through collaboration and partnership that great ideas and technologies are born. Ontario's life sciences sector acts as a case in point, where researchers, public institutions and the private sector work together in finding solutions. Our life sciences community acts as a key driver of our province's economy, creating high-level jobs and producing important breakthroughs.

The statistics on Ontario's life sciences sector are impressive. There are approximately 38,000 high-value jobs, 1,000 companies, \$9.1 billion in revenue, and the export value is \$5.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What is this government doing to ensure that our life sciences sector is supported?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for that question.

Mr. Speaker, by bringing together our world-class scientists, our leading research institutions and a strong private sector, we can make important discoveries that generate economic growth and also create jobs.

Recently, we invested \$36 million in 17 research projects in seven research institutions and universities in the greater Toronto area. We also announced a \$100-million investment in the Ontario Brain Institute. We have committed \$357 million to the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. We're also encouraging and helping small and medium-sized businesses to conduct research and make innovations in biotechnology, biomedical and also pharmaceuticals.

As the Minister of Research and Innovation, I am proud of the record of this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm glad to hear that our government is taking steps to support new ideas and technologies that will drive Ontario's future economy and create jobs. In this global economy, it is critical to promote collaboration and build on the strength of our life sciences community.

Yesterday, the Minister of Research and Innovation participated in the BIO 2013 International Convention in Chicago.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Research and Innovation: Can he please tell the House what this government is doing to promote and attract global investments in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the member for that question.

On Sunday and Monday, I had the opportunity to participate in the BIO 2013 International Convention in Chicago. The BIO 2013 convention is one of the largest and most important global events in the biotechnology industry. The event featured conferences and exhibitions well attended by policy-makers, scientists and business leaders from around the world.

Organized by the Biotechnology Industry Organization, the event gave Ontario's delegation of more than 300 people—scientists, engineers and business leaders—the opportunity to attend this conference and have the op-

portunity to learn about major trends affecting the industry and to also network with scientists and business leaders from around the world. Most importantly, the convention gave Ontario the opportunity to showcase its strengths on the world stage. This event also helped promote global investments in Ontario that will generate economic growth and create jobs in this province.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, let us recall what the leader of the NDP stated in the Legislature on April 16:

“What’s really shocking for people is, the Premier doesn’t seem to be showing any remorse or regret. Instead, it’s just full steam ahead with politics as usual. Yesterday, Ontarians learned that the people of this province are going to be paying \$275 million to cancel that Mississauga plant....

“Why can’t the Premier admit that this was cynical politics at its worst and actually show some remorse for this waste of public money?”

Premier, it’s statements like this that indicate to the people of Ontario that the NDP will support calling the PC motion for debate when it is tabled. Will you commit to getting results for the people of Ontario and to calling our motion for debate when it is tabled? Or will you hide from this confidence motion and push it aside, like all your other Liberal scandals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are two parts of that question that I want to address, and the first is on the regret. I think we could go through Hansard and you could count the number of times I have said “regret”—in fact, maybe we’ll have somebody do that. I have said consistently that I regret that we are in this situation. I regret that we were not able to make the decision earlier, because there is always a cost associated with backtracking when a project has begun. So I’ve been very clear that I regret that. I’ve said it was a political decision; it was a political decision that all parties agreed with.

1130

In terms of confidence in this government, there is a huge opportunity looming—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There’s a huge opportunity looming for the members in this House to express confidence, or not, in the government, and that is called the budget. On May 2, there is an opportunity for people in this Legislature to express their confidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Premier, you talk the talk, but you don’t walk the walk. We still haven’t got answers.

The NDP may think it’s okay to prop up your Liberal government in the midst of a scandal or when it means the destruction of thousands of good jobs in the horse racing industry, but even they must recognize that this gas plant scandal is the straw that broke the horse’s back.

Premier, you’ve dismissed this motion of confidence as a PR stunt. Your assistant to the Minister of Energy has even compared the massive waste of money to a moon mission, all proof that your government just doesn’t take this issue seriously.

Well, the people of my constituency take this issue very seriously. If you think you have the confidence of this House and the people of Ontario, call the motion of confidence when we table it and prove you retain the confidence of this House.

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

There is no one in this House that’s looking forward more to the expression of confidence in the government on the budget than I am. We share that anticipation, and I look forward to it.

I do hope that members of the official opposition will read the budget, that they will actually look at what’s in it. It disturbs me that the critic has said that no matter what is in the budget, they’re going to vote against it. It doesn’t seem to me that that is a very responsible position.

The other thing I want to say is that we take the issue around the gas plants extremely seriously. That is why when I came into this position, I called for an open process, I asked for an expansion of the mandate of the committee so that a full range of questions could be asked, I said I would appear before the committee—I’m going to, on Tuesday—and I said that I was going to ask the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. I’ve done all those things.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last year, the government eliminated the Program Enhancement Grant that supports arts in schools. Now we are seeing the impact on children. According to People for Education, only 44% of Ontario elementary schools now have a full-time or part-time specialist music teacher. That’s a drop of 5% from last year and the lowest since 2005.

Why is the government reducing student access to music in Ontario schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m very pleased to be able to talk about music education in our schools, because in fact I believe that music education in our schools is extremely important, just as are education in the performance arts and education in the visual arts. In fact, all those things are part of the curriculum.

We fund the curriculum through the Foundation Grant. The per-pupil Foundation Grant provides the core funding. But we have also provided additional money for 4,900 elementary specialist teachers so that there is an opportunity for school boards to make a choice. Some have chosen to spend that money on music teachers,

some on arts teachers, some on phys. ed. teachers and some on tech teachers. There are specialist teachers—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, yesterday, Graham Henderson, president of Music Canada, spoke of “the declining commitment toward music education in Ontario.” Indeed, access to music teachers has fallen drastically since 1998. Only one in four schools in northern Ontario has a specialist music teacher, and low-income students are least likely to have the opportunity to sing in a choir or play in a band.

When will the minister take action to ensure that all students in Ontario have access to music in their education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Well, as I just said, all students do have access to music because it's part of the curriculum. You should not assume that an elementary teacher who is not a specialist teacher does not actually have the ability to teach music because many do have qualifications in music as well.

But I think we need to go back and look at the current People for Education report a little bit more closely, because if you look at their own report, they said that the number of schools with a music teacher exclusive to that school was 49%, plus 30% had itinerant music teachers in 2010-11, in other words, 79% of schools. If you look at the next year, yes, there was a trend to itinerant music teachers because declining enrolment was happening. But you'll actually find—

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: —when you add up the numbers, that 82% of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I would remind the Minister of Education: I stand, you sit.

VISITORS

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I beg your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. There were four more constituents of mine that I apparently had missed: Anne-Marie Branch, Martha McNeil, Barbara Abrams and Joan Tadman. I apologize. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay, on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, somebody all the way from Holtyre who now lives around somewhere down south: Mr. James Moffat is here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we recess, I've been hearing a couple of things that I want to bring to the attention of the House—and I ask all of the members to help me with this—and that is, when we mention somebody's absence, it is a very long-standing tradition that we remove ourselves from making comment on anyone's absence, as most people may not know the reason why. I would suspect that we would all be very gentle on that particular issue.

The second one is, when people are answering questions or putting questions, I'm beginning to hear an inordinate amount of heckling from with the same side. So I would ask you to stop trying to provoke by making comments while someone is questioning or making comments while someone is answering—to lower, instead of raise, the provocation. Please help me with that, and I think we will be able to move forward quite well.

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

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FLOODING

Ms. Laurie Scott: Over the past few days, my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has been one of the areas in Ontario that has been hit hard by flooding. This has resulted in a state of emergency being declared in parts of the city of Kawartha Lakes and Minden Hills. In particular, the Burnt River, Black River and Gull River areas in the community of Minden have been most affected.

Over the weekend I toured many of the areas which have experienced the worst flooding, and it was heart-breaking to see the number of residents who have lost their homes and contents. I also saw many local businesses that have been dealt a crippling blow.

Local EMS and emergency personnel are to be commended for their quick action in dealing with the emergency, setting up crisis centres, providing materials for sand-bagging and keeping the public informed through regular website and Facebook updates and radio. Similarly, the personnel of the Trent-Severn Waterway have done a great job in monitoring the water levels and working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

When I toured the hardest-hit areas over the weekend, I was both proud and heartened to see the outpouring of kindness and support from countless volunteers who gave up their weekends to help with the filling and placement of sandbags, or the use of their own watercraft to retrieve stranded residents.

Although some water levels are receding, other rivers have not yet peaked. Many of my constituents are suffering and will need help to get through this. I invite the ministers responsible to tour the affected areas of my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and I am confident that the federal and provincial governments would not turn their backs on them in their time of need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Stoney—from Hamilton East–Stoney–Creek.

BATTLE OF STONEY CREEK

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. The 200th commemoration of the Battle of Stoney Creek will take

place in just over five weeks. The Battle of Stoney Creek, June 5, 1813, was the turning point of the War of 1812—the victory that ensured our nationhood.

In James Elliott's book *Strange Fatality*, he notes that a handful of native warriors led by John Norton, Mohawk war chief, played a significant role in fighting the American invaders during a night raid. Whooping and yelling ensued by native warriors and British troops, which convinced the Americans there were large numbers of native warriors, and they retreated.

At Battlefield Park, starting on Friday, May 31, activities will begin at 1 p.m. with the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battlefield Monument. That evening, there will be a parade, a memorial service and a Battlefield Cemetery rededication. Saturday and Sunday, June 1 and 2, will be filled with re-enactments, including a Saturday evening battle and a Sunday afternoon battle. Fireworks will punctuate the activities on both Friday and Saturday evenings.

It will be my distinct honour to participate in the re-enactment as a British captain in the 8th Regiment. I have been a re-enactor in the past, but nothing will compare with this privilege of participating in the bicentennial.

I encourage everyone to come to Stoney Creek's Battlefield Park to participate in the festivities and feel a part of these beginnings of our great nation. Speaker, we're expecting close to 1,000 re-enactors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I expect the member was okay with me saying "Stoney Creek" first, because that's what it was about.

Mr. Paul Miller: Good move, Speaker. Good move.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate that.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This past Sunday morning, people in Toronto and all around the country woke up to an unfamiliar sight when they opened the newspaper: There was an X visible beside Toronto in the NHL standings, confirming that the Leafs had made the playoffs for the first time in nine long years. They clinched Saturday night against Ontario's other team at their home away from home in Ottawa by beating the Senators thanks to another outstanding performance by goaltender James Reimer.

This Maple Leaf team was a team that was supposed to finish near the bottom once again, but the Leafs defied expectations in the shortened season, so much so that one is left to consider a legislative motion that calls on Gary Bettman to limit all future NHL seasons to 48 games.

Nine years has been a long time. Many of the current Leafs were still in high school nine years ago. Emerging star Nazem Kadri was 13. It was so long that the phrase "I want to live long enough to see them win the Stanley Cup" became "I want to live long enough to see them make the playoffs."

I'm sure all members of the Legislative Assembly will rise with me today, along with Steve Muir from my

constituency office, to congratulate the Toronto Maple Leafs on clinching their playoff berth, and wish them well and success in the upcoming playoffs. Go, Leafs, go!

FLOODING

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to note the challenges faced by communities across Parry Sound–Muskoka with recent flooding. I would like to recognize that and thank the individuals involved in keeping our communities safe. I would especially like to recognize mayors Claude Doughty of Huntsville and Graydon Smith of Bracebridge for their tremendous efforts in dealing with the record water levels.

We've been lucky. There has been a lot of damage to property, but thankfully, no loss of life. The flooding has caused many culvert and road washouts throughout the area, and damages to homes and businesses. In Huntsville and Bracebridge, entire subdivisions are underwater. The village of Vankoughnet, where I make my home, has been hard hit with the flooding of the Black River. Accesses to areas around Vankoughnet are still cut off.

Throughout the flood, as both Huntsville and Bracebridge implemented state-of-emergency measures, there were ample updates that provided up-to-the-minute information to keep our residents safe. I would like to recognize our emergency responders, municipal employees and MNR staff, who were able to move quickly to ensure that the flood conditions were managed as best as possible. Also, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have pitched in to help their neighbours.

I am pleased that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing toured the area today to see the damage first-hand. Although some water levels are receding, other areas will peak in the next few days, so we need to remain vigilant. Many Parry Sound–Muskoka residents, businesses and municipalities are suffering and need help to recover from the recent record floods. I will do my part to ensure the provincial government provides the necessary support.

SUSTAINABLE WATERLOO REGION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This past week, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the Sustainable Waterloo Evening of Recognition. Sustainable Waterloo Region is a not-for-profit organization that has made incredible progress in advancing the environmental sustainability of organizations across the region.

They have grown tremendously in their collective impact in recent years. In 2012, the Regional Carbon Initiative, Sustainable Waterloo Region's flagship program, increased its membership by 20 organizations, employing 13% of the region's workforce. Members have now committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45,000 tonnes, which is equivalent to taking 10,000 cars off the road.

Last Thursday, Sustainable Waterloo Region recognized five members that made significant achievements in the past year. Awards were presented to XCG Environmental Engineers and Scientists; AET Environmental Consultants, Ecologists and Scientists; VeriForm metal fabricating solutions; Enermodal Engineering; and the region of Waterloo.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to the recipients, and I would also like to congratulate Sustainable Waterloo Region for their outstanding achievements in working towards a thriving Waterloo region with a healthy environment and a vibrant economy. To quote Wilfrid Laurier president Max Blouw, “If you have people within your organization that are passionate about environmental issues, mobilize them.” It is amazing what can be achieved when we mobilize on sustainable development, and I would like to personally commend Sustainable Waterloo Region executive director Mike Morrice and board chair Dr. Barry Colbert for their leadership in this area.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I come to the Legislature today to speak about a very sad situation, and that is that in my community there are young people being shot at on a regular basis, young people trying to go to school and trying to come home from school. Their parents are, in fact, afraid of sending them to school by themselves because they're being shot at by gunmen. This is happening over and over again.

About three weeks ago, a young 15-year-old coming back from an after-school program was shot at. Luckily, he survived; others have not survived the shootings. We have great schools in Lawrence Heights—Lawrence Heights Middle School, Flemington, John Polanyi high school—yet the children and families don't feel safe, because there are too many gunmen and too many guns on our streets.

1510

It's about time we all came together in this Legislature to say that we do not condone these criminals that shoot at innocent children and drive around our cities with guns in their cars. We need to take some strong action. I think we need to join together with our police, our social workers, our schools and our parents and stop this gun madness that these few criminals use to destroy our communities and attack our children. We've got to stop this gun madness by these criminals.

ROSANNAGH MacLENNAN

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pride to recognize Rosannagh “Rosie” MacLennan being named the Ontario Female Athlete of the Year. As Canadians, who can forget Rosie in London? We looked on with pride as she won Canada's sole gold medal at the 2012 summer Olympics in London. She won that gold in women's trampoline.

Rosie was born and raised in King City. She started trampoline at the age of seven and began competing internationally at age 11. Since then, she was the Canadian National Women's Champion in 2005, 2009 and again in 2011. This was Rosie's second Olympics, first competing in 2008 in Beijing. She also won the gold in the 2011 Pan Am Games and came in second at the 2011 World Trampoline Championships.

It was in London that Rosie was able to carry on her grandfather's dreams of Olympic gold. Her grandfather, Lorne Patterson, was to compete in the 1940 Olympics as a gymnast, but those Olympics were cancelled because of the Second World War, and thus he was never able to compete for Canada. Sadly, he passed away before his granddaughter brought home the gold.

It's an honour for me to recognize Rosie MacLennan for being named the 2012 Ontario Female Athlete of the Year. I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in extending our heartfelt congratulations.

PETER ORPHANOS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Today I rise to remember and pay tribute to a friend and western Mississauga resident. Peter Orphanos passed away of brain cancer last December. Peter Orphanos was one of the founders of the Sierra Club of Peel and was, to the end, a tireless campaigner for the environment.

Prior to his retirement from a 35-year teaching career with the Peel District School Board, Peter shared his passion for nature, and in particular the diversity of the Credit River watershed, with generations of students.

Peter advocated for the protection and preservation of his beloved Credit River. His most recent project was to have the river officially incorporated into Ontario's greenbelt. Peter received Credit Valley Conservation's 2012 Award of Excellence and was honoured by Eco-Source. In 2012, Peter was recognized with the prestigious Conservation Pioneer Award.

This past Sunday, Peter's Streetsville community organized a memorial service to celebrate his accomplishments and to share our memories. The Peter Orphanos “Credit Forever” campaign, to fulfill his long-held dream of planting half a million trees in the Credit River Valley, was launched, with 400 saplings planted and a commemorative plaque to Peter unveiled on the grounds of Streetsville Memorial Park.

You have left a lasting glow on western Mississauga, Peter Orphanos. Your community salutes you.

LONDON LIGHTNING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take the time to acknowledge, for the second year in a row, the London Lightning basketball club as the reigning National Basketball League champion. The Lightning defeated the Summer-side Storm, from Prince Edward Island, 87-80 in the fourth game of a five-game series to clinch the title.

This year marks the National Basketball League's second season as well as London Lightning's second

championship victory. Led by coach Michael Ray Richardson, a former NBA all-star, the Lightning excited crowds all year and finished with the best record in the league.

Since the league's inception, the London Lightning have offered basketball fans in London an entertaining display of athletics and excitement. They've also cultivated a positive reputation off the court by engaging the community and reaching out to youth basketball programs to inspire and teach young kids valuable skills and life lessons.

As a lifelong basketball fan myself, I am proud of my riding's team's success and continued efforts to grow and expand the NBL brand. Congratulations to the London Lightning franchise, and I look forward to celebrating a three-peat next year.

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

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

WEARING OF PINS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I will be making a ministerial statement this afternoon and would seek unanimous consent to allow my opposition critics and myself to wear the Canadian Cancer Society daffodil during my statement and the opposition responses.

Tomorrow morning, we will be seeking unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear daffodil pins in recognition of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month. Daffodil pins will be distributed to all members of the Legislature in the morning, following granting of unanimous consent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has asked for unanimous consent for the opposition critics and herself to wear the pin today and will be seeking unanimous consent tomorrow. Is it the pleasure of the House to agree? Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANCER CARE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April 27 is the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Day, a day when we have a chance to show we stand shoulder to shoulder with those fighting cancer. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Canadian Cancer Society. That's an important milestone in the history of an organization that does such vital work.

Since 1938, the Canadian Cancer Society has been funding research and cancer prevention programs, supporting people living with cancer, along with their fam-

ilies and caregivers, and advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians. My heartfelt thanks go to the dedicated staff and volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for their unwavering commitment to the battle against cancer.

I think it's important to acknowledge just how far we've come when it comes to cancer care in Ontario: 75 years ago, if you were diagnosed with cancer, your chances of survival were about 25%; today, over 60% of Canadians with cancer will survive at least five years after their diagnosis, and Ontario has one of the finest cancer care systems in the world. We're continuing to make that system even stronger by investing in screening programs, in prevention efforts and in specialized health human resources.

Last October, for example, I was very pleased to announce that we're integrating breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening services into a single coordinated provincial program, which will allow us to reach more Ontarians. Evidence shows that for these three cancers specifically, regular screening can detect changes or abnormalities that could become cancerous. Regular screening can also find cancer at an early stage, when outcomes are much more favourable. Ontarians can sign up through their physicians to receive mailed notifications when they're due for their next breast, cervical or colorectal screening.

We've also created the Time to Screen tool as a stepping stone towards an eventual personalized cancer risk assessment profile. The Time to Screen tool gives people more information on when they should start screening, based on their age and gender. This is available at Ontario.ca/screenforlife.

As a result of our investments, I'm pleased to share that we're meeting our provincial targets for breast and cervical screening for women.

We know that when patients are first diagnosed with cancer, it can be an overwhelming experience. That's why, in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario, we introduced 14 patient navigators in hospitals across Ontario last May. These are nurses with specialized education in cancer care. They support patients being tested for cancer, conduct assessments, make referrals, provide patient education, develop plans of care and do follow-ups.

Cancer Care Ontario also created aboriginal patient navigators and regional aboriginal cancer leads in four key regions of the province where significant aboriginal populations live to give aboriginal communities better, faster access to care.

1520

I'm very proud of our continued efforts towards our goal of having the lowest smoking rates in the country. Cigarettes are the number one cause of preventable cancer, and tobacco-related disease costs Ontario's health system about \$2.2 billion every year. We've already accomplished a great deal with Smoke-Free Ontario, and we renewed the strategy in 2011, with an added investment of \$5 million. As part of our plan to help smokers who want to quit, 43 community health centres across the

province now provide over-the-counter nicotine cessation aids and counselling at no cost to smokers.

In collaboration with community, workplace and health care partners, Ontario's launching two more innovative smoking cessation initiatives. First, we're partnering with select workplaces and 11 public health units to reduce smoking among workers in the industrial sector and in the service sector, sectors that have high rates of smoking. Second, we're helping patients in hospitals quit smoking through various strategies, such as providing both brief and intensive counselling and improving care for patients with asthma and other chronic conditions. These new initiatives build on the success of the other supports we offer smokers in Ontario, including free nicotine replacement therapy at 122 family health teams across the province and providing better access to smoking cessation aids, which can now be prescribed by pharmacists.

To help prevent young people from starting to smoke, we've taken action to protect youth from exposure to cigarette displays in stores, and our public health units across Ontario continue to work with schools and their communities to engage youth in tobacco-control activities.

Another way that we're safeguarding the health of our young people is through legislation that would restrict access to tanning beds by youth under 18 years of age. We know that early exposure to artificial UV radiation can cause malignant melanoma, a deadly form of cancer, later in life, yet even in the face of all the warnings about the risks, tanning bed use among young people has been increasing. As you know, the proposed legislation is in second reading. I want to take this opportunity to thank all members from all parties for their support of this legislation. I would like to acknowledge the member from Nickel Belt and the former member from London-Fanshawe for their efforts to restrict access to youth tanning.

Speaker, my deep appreciation goes to Cancer Care Ontario for its partnership and hard work when it comes to managing the province's cancer system. I also want to thank all of our dedicated doctors, nurses, technologists and all the other providers who treat patients and help the people of Ontario stay healthy.

Let's wear our daffodils with pride and show people with cancer that they are not alone in their battle.

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. John Gerretsen: I rise in the House today to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which is being commemorated across our province and across Canada. The theme for the week is "We All Have a Role." All levels of government, all participants in the justice system and all of us in Ontario have a vital role to play in supporting victims of crime.

No one ever expects that they, a family member or a loved one will be a victim, but when it happens, it can be

devastating and often have lifelong effects. That's why our government is committed to providing victims with the help and support they need to recover.

We have a broad range of services in place to assist those who have been affected by the trauma of crime—services that meet their unique needs—beginning in the aftermath of crime and continuing through to recovery. I'm pleased to say that we've made a number of improvements to these services in the past year. For example, Family Court support workers are now available across Ontario in every Ontario Court of Justice. These workers help victims of family violence, many of them women and children, stay safe when they enter the Family Court system, typically one of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship. They refer victims to community services and supports, provide information about the court process and help with safety planning, including getting to and from court safely.

A new program, set to begin in the coming months, will deliver specialized services to aboriginal victims of crime on the James Bay and Hudson Bay coast area. The Mushkegowuk Council will deliver the new services in eight remote communities where no such supports for victims currently exist. Victims of sexual and physical assault, elder and child abuse, and the families of homicide victims will all benefit from these services.

We're also helping victims in the north and in rural areas through the Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund. This special fund covers travels costs where distance would otherwise make it impossible for victims and their families to fully participate in the criminal court process. It also provides for special accommodations for victims with disabilities and helps pay for language interpretation services for family members.

Province-wide services are now in place for male survivors of sexual abuse, helping both recent and historic victims to recover. These include counselling, peer support and specialized 24-hour crisis and referral services.

Of course, all victims of violent crime across Ontario have access to the Victim Support Line, which provides information and referrals to agencies that help victims in their communities. This multilingual telephone line is available across Ontario in most languages spoken in the province.

Speaker, we are proud of the programs and services we have across the province, but we know that none of them would work without the dedicated people and organizations that deliver them on a day-to-day basis, in and out of the court system. National Victims of Crime Awareness Week gives us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate them.

So on Thursday of this week, I will have the honour of presenting this year's Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction right here in the Legislature. These awards pay tribute to the high quality of services and supports that individuals and groups, volunteers and agencies provide to victims of crime each and every day. The awards also honour the efforts of those who have been personally impacted by crime and who have raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario.

I will be introducing the award recipients in this House before question period on Thursday, to give us all an opportunity to applaud their tremendous achievements. They only represent the thousands of people who are involved in this work on a day-to-day basis. Their stories are inspiring, and they remind us of what we can achieve and what we can overcome in the face of adversity.

As we mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, I encourage all members to recognize the efforts of victims who have worked through their own personal pain and suffering and loss to help other victims, and the dedication of those professionals and volunteers who dedicate themselves, every day, to helping victims in their own community.

CANCER CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus in recognition of the month of April as Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Month and welcome members of the Canadian Cancer Society who are with us today in the House.

Today is Daffodil Day. On this special day, we ask all Canadians to take a moment to pay homage or reflect upon those who have passed and all who are living with cancer and to support them in their courageous fight against this disease.

Today I am myself proudly wearing a daffodil pin to commemorate my sister Marj, who passed away from cancer; and my sister Bonnie; my mom, Jean; and my sister-in-law Joanne, who are all cancer survivors; and also to my all-time hero, Terry Fox.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, an estimated 186,000 new cases of cancer and 75 deaths from cancer will occur in Canada in a year. Prostate, lung, breast and colorectal cancer account for the top four newly diagnosed cancers. But to all who are on this arduous journey, we say to you again that you are not alone.

Our fight against cancer has had 75 years of success. At its inception in the 1940s, the cancer society reported that the cancer survival rate was 25%. Today, I'm pleased to say that over 60% of Canadians diagnosed with cancer will survive at least five years after their diagnosis. This is a great accomplishment, so I want to extend special congratulations to the Canadian Cancer Society as it marks its 75th anniversary this year.

1530

Again, thank you to the Canadian Cancer Society and especially to the valued volunteers and donors for all of your incredible work.

I encourage all Canadians to do something special for those living with cancer, to contribute in some way and to help bring the hope of Daffodil Day to full bloom: a day when no one will have to fear cancer.

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus to respond to the

minister's statement on National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. As the minister mentioned, the goal of victims' week is to raise awareness about issues facing victims of crime. This includes the law, but also the services and programs that are in place to help victims and their families. The theme for this year is "We All Have a Role." It's a powerful statement, because indeed we do all have a role in preventing crime and assisting victims. Some go above and beyond in fulfilling that role, and I would like to highlight the work that we do on this very important occasion in the short time that I have.

In particular, I'd like to mention Caledon Dufferin Victim Services. A largely volunteer-run organization, Caledon Dufferin Victim Services offers 24/7 short-term crisis support, practical assistance and an information and referral program to victims of crime, abuse, tragic circumstances and disaster through a variety of services and programs.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers for all the exemplary work they do in helping victims of crime across Ontario, again largely through the amazing, courageous, hard work of volunteers. It truly is astounding.

I would like to urge all Canadians to go online, do your research and find out how you can help victims of crime, because we must remember that we all have a role.

There's also a new organization that I'd like to mention called NeedHelpNow.ca. It is a resource designed to help youth in Canada who have been negatively impacted by the creation and distribution of sexual images or videos of themselves being shared among peers. In the wake of recent media coverage where this type of exploitation has ended in tragedy, raising public awareness on what youth can do if they find themselves in a difficult online situation has never been more needed. In creating the NeedHelpNow.ca website, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection is letting these kids know that they are not alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member didn't use a prop; I didn't see it.

Further responses?

CANCER CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's also my pleasure to talk about the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Day, the day when we have a chance to stand shoulder to shoulder with people who are fighting cancer.

Of course, this year there's an elephant in the room, because for over a thousand people who received diluted chemotherapy drugs, the system has let them down. What does it mean? Well, it means that time, effort and energy that should be building on the excellent cancer care programs that we have in Ontario are now being rerouted as we try to rebuild trust. The trust that was built upon for decades was shattered in one very sad news story on Friday, three weeks ago.

The minister also talked about the work that is being done in this House for the Skin Cancer Prevention Act. Well, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act was first introduced five years ago by me and reintroduced a number of times. It died three times on the order paper before it was reintroduced by the minister as a government bill. I'm really grateful that the government has brought forward this piece of legislation, but I would be even happier if I saw it on the schedule for debate. The government controls their schedule of debates, as opposed to a private member's bill, where we're slated, and mine is not till 2014. We now have the opportunity to move this forward way faster, so please bring it forward so that we don't see this going the way that other attempts have gone.

The same thing applies to flavoured tobacco. There's lots that can be done to protect people from developing cancer. There was a private members' bill that you and I co-sponsored, actually, Mr. Speaker, to ban single sales of flavoured tobacco. Well, there's a loophole in that bill that needs to be fixed.

All this is to say thank you to all of the volunteers who help make our cancer treatment centre—and support—what it is: something we can all be proud of.

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to celebrate or to commemorate the eighth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. I think it's very crucial and very essential that we recognize the great work that victim services around the province provide in supporting those victims of crime.

I think I'd also like to particularly celebrate or recognize the great work of Victim Services of Peel, which operates in my region. Their staff and their volunteers form a part of a not-for-profit charitable organization that does excellent work in providing services for those who have been impacted by crime. If it wasn't for those volunteers, these services would not actually be possible, so we particularly have to recognize the great work of the volunteers.

This year's theme, "We All Have a Role," is also quite telling. I think it's important that we look beyond just providing services on a reactionary level and move towards considering what we can do to prevent victims of crime from ever being victims.

I also would like to raise the issue of the power of language. When we speak about people who have endured and survived crime, I think it's important to look at them as survivors of crime as opposed to victims of crime. They're people who have shown courage in the face of great tribulation and great obstacles in their lives, and let's celebrate their ability to survive and to persevere by referring to them as survivors.

I think we need to look at a couple of areas in order to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, to prevent crime in the first place. We need to address the

root causes of violence, which often are related to inequality and poverty, and tools and education to prevent violence in the first place. I think if we look at education as a tool to empower members of our community, we can ensure that people have the ability—parents, children, women, people who are more vulnerable in society have the tools to identify potential risks and have the tools to prevent those circumstances from happening in the first place.

While we recognize the survivors of crime, let's take steps to ensure that we not only react to the problems but prevent them from happening in the first place.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning social conditions in the First Nations communities. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Del Duca assumes ballot item number 27 and Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item number 3.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions, and I think I'll turn to someone I haven't seen in a while, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to be considered for that privilege.

This petition is dated but it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthalmology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012"—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Health is interrupting me here. She should have every reason to interrupt—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will read his petition.

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

“Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients”—look what they’re doing with long-term care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with physicians” and the OMA before making cuts to health care in the province of Ontario.

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition, and present it to Callum, one of the pages here on their second-last day—

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

1540

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation.”

I support this and will give this to page Theodore to deliver to the table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas ‘community of interest’ is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

“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 the petition, and I give it to Glory.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

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

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

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

“That Ontario’s members of provincial Parliament and the ... government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals.”

I affix my name in full support.

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, will sign it, and give it to Jack to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “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 petition and I will send it down with Morgan.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Experimental Lakes Area is a one-of-a-kind whole ecosystem freshwater research station in northwestern Ontario;

“Whereas the facility has provided essential research since 1968 that has helped” develop and “improve both scientific knowledge and government policy;

“Whereas protecting our freshwater ecosystems will ensure we in the north can continue to safely enjoy and benefit from our natural resources;

“Whereas the decision of the federal Conservative government to close this facility was a political decision and not based on science or the interests of northerners;

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

“To take immediate steps to ensure the Experimental Lakes Area is reopened and continues to produce the ground-breaking scientific research that makes it renowned the world over.”

I support this and will give this to page Jack to deliver.

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

“Whereas the latest policies from 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 petition, and I will send it with this great page, Madelyn.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’d like to affix my signature, thank all the people from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for signing it, and give it to page Rosalin.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

“Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

“Whereas Ontario’s Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

“Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment;

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

“To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources.”

I support this and give this to page Kamryn to deliver.

1550

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: “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 latest policies from the” McGuinty/Wynne “government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;” and

Whereas the member from Simcoe–Grey serves his riding with distinction, agrees with this petition, and will continue to do so; and

Whereas the member from Wellington–Halton Hills also distinctly serves his riding and agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Oxford, who obviously serves his riding with distinction, agrees with this petition as well; and

Whereas the member from Thornhill agrees with this petition and serves his riding with distinction; and

Whereas the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who also serves her riding with distinction, agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who serves with distinction in his riding, agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Oshawa serves his riding with distinction and also agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Durham serves his riding with distinction and also agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Halton agrees with this petition and also serves his riding with distinction; and

Whereas the member from Leeds–Grenville agrees with this petition and serves his riding with distinction; and

Whereas the member from York–Simcoe—she serves her riding with great distinguishing character; and

Whereas the member from Dufferin–Carleton—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Caledon.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: —Caledon, sorry—also serves her riding with great distinction; and

Whereas the member from Prince Edward–Hastings serves his riding with distinction and agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Kitchener–Conestoga agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Huron–Bruce also serves her riding with distinction and agrees with this petition; and

Whereas the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London agrees with this petition as well, and serves his riding with—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind the member that you should be reading the petition, and those others can be done individually.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I agree with this petition and my colleagues, as aforementioned, and I will affix my name to 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.”

On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have lost their lives due to the way they look and nothing about what they did, I’m going to sign this. I’m going to give it to Jason to be delivered to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 22, 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 (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I’m very pleased to rise today and share a northwestern Ontario viewpoint on Bill G36, the Local Food Act. In theory, this is a great idea. Local foods are vital to the health and well-being of our community and successful family farms are a vital part of a successful local economy.

When I think of a local foods act, instinctively I think of a blueprint, a document that outlines how government will support local foods and the concrete steps it will take to enhance and grow this very important industry. In this regard, I think of a long-term commitment to enhanced research that studies local and regional ecosystems that can help increase productivity and yields. I think of education that not only promotes healthy food choices to the public but that also promotes and encourages young people to pursue agriculture and agri-foods as a career choice.

I think of amendments to existing acts that make it easier for farmers and producers to focus on the act of farming. I think of government initiatives that promote, market and encourage the distribution of local foods to nearby markets, and I think of an integrated strategy that promotes health and wellness across Ontario by increasing access to local foods. In other words, I think of strategies intended to help our farmers produce their goods and increase access to local foods among segments

of the population who may have difficulties obtaining those foods.

When I look at this bill, however, I don’t see those supports. I don’t see any of those initiatives. I don’t even see the framework for a plan. So what does the Local Food Act do? Well, in the preamble, there’s a great deal of flowery language about the importance of local foods, with which I agree, but it trails off from there. When it comes to actual substance, if you can call it that, it provides for the future development of goals and targets once stakeholders whom the minister deems to be relevant are consulted.

In other words, this government hasn’t even identified goals or targets that it hopes to accomplish with this act. They realize local food is important, and that’s a start, but unfortunately, that’s about as far as they got. The bill doesn’t set out goals or objectives; instead, it says that the minister can feel free to do so at a later date.

It doesn’t even outline a commitment to listening to all stakeholders if the government does decide to outline a plan. Instead, it says, “Before establishing or amending a goal or target, the minister shall consult organizations”—and this is the really important part—“that, in the minister’s opinion, have an interest in the goal or target.” In other words, the minister will hand-pick the people she consults with to ensure that the recommendations are consistent with what the Liberal Party wants them to be. Maybe we could have given the minister the benefit of the doubt, but we in the north have seen what happens when the government of the day gets to hand-pick their audience. We saw that with the Far North Act, where this government listened to everybody but northern First Nations, northern municipalities and northern residents.

In northwestern Ontario, our producers are already feeling that this province’s agricultural policies are out of touch with our realities. For instance, programs such as forage insurance often leave out unique northern species, and there is a strong belief on the part of northern farmers that the program is in need of major review. The Agricornp program is also in desperate need of review. Farmers are growing frustrated with these programs, and despite making equal payments to be part of the program, northerners feel that they are being treated differently and unfairly.

Additionally, farmers in my region are worried that the local abattoir which they fought so hard to establish is at risk because exemptions that were put in place before the abattoir was established in the first place are still in place, causing it to miss out on a minimum of 200 head of cattle annually. It may not seem like much, but for a small northern operation, it is significant. Yet these are issues that are not being prioritized by this government.

Producers in my region are also looking for reassurances that the government is committed to the long-term viability of the Emo agricultural research station. In the northwest, we live in an entirely different ecosystem than a vast majority of the province, and this station provides vital supports, important research and knowledge that cannot be replaced. We know that the challenges we face

in our region are unique and our climate is unique, and we want the government to know and understand that.

These are the kinds of issues that a Local Food Act should be looking at. It should be looking at creating plans to ensure that these challenges are met. It should be ensuring that decisions that are made promote the long-term viability of agriculture in all regions of the province, but the act in its current form doesn't even guarantee that northwestern Ontario producers will have a seat at the table when the goals and targets are determined.

There's even more than that. A good and effective Local Food Act would not only help ensure the long-term viability of agricultural operations, but it would help improve access to those local foods. It's one thing to have a week that is intended to promote—and inform individuals about—the importance of local food, but what good is that week if people do not have the means or capacity to access these goods? As my party's critic for agriculture and agri-food pointed out, food is a necessity for all, but it is not equally accessible to all. That point is even stronger in northwestern Ontario.

1600

Certainly, I believe the government could be doing more to support our local farmers' markets. It's always a pleasure to be able to visit the Clover Valley Farmers' Market in Fort Frances and the Cloverbelt farmers' market in Dryden. The producers who supply these markets do an outstanding job of reaching out to other communities. Many of them travel hours to attend regular markets in Sioux Lookout, Kenora, Red Lake and Atikokan, but they also have their challenges, including transporting the food to those markets, as well as storage and refrigeration. Additional supports on the part of the government could certainly help improve access to these fresh goods in these communities, where agricultural production is not as prevalent.

One area where we are completely lacking in a strategy that is so desperately needed is in the Far North. At the best of times, access to fresh, healthy foods is limited and expensive. A four-litre bag of milk can cost upwards of \$20, a 10-pound bag of flour can cost upwards of \$40, and fresh fruits and vegetables are almost nonexistent or are cost-prohibitive for the people who live in these communities.

Foods that are readily available are foods that are preserved, such as pop and chips, and this has created a diabetes epidemic among First Nations youth and adults. Without access to healthy alternatives, obesity has become a problem. I'm sure everyone sitting in this Legislature understands how lethargic and zapped of energy a person can feel after eating unhealthy meals for a few days straight. Try living in a community where those are the only food options.

If this government truly wanted to be proactive, if it really wanted to make a difference, the minister, our current Premier, would create a coordinated strategy with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the Ministry of Health to improve access to healthy, local foods in communities located in the Far North. Together they would

work with First Nations to develop strategies for the production of local foods, whether it be through the establishment of on-reserve greenhouses or finding crops that would grow in the unique climate and soils that exist in our Far North.

These communities aren't avoiding local foods; they simply do not have the capacity to make local food production a reality. When the minister speaks of opening new markets, these might just be the ideal new markets to open up.

I've spoken with First Nations, such as Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, who are interested in exploring strategies that could allow them to produce their own local foods. Again, maybe these are the types of strategies that this government should be developing.

Governments should be leading, but instead our Ontario government is lagging behind. There is nothing new, bold or innovative that is contained in this bill. In fact, the original incarnation, where the government planned to host Local Foods Week at a time when those foods are only being planted, just shows how out of touch this government is.

What is disturbing is that it isn't just the Liberal Party. This is the government and the bureaucracy that are proposing these changes. It's disturbing that the experts within the Ministry of Agriculture and agri-foods can't come up with advice or provide advice that shows knowledge of the industry that they're supposed to be promoting.

As my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out, we in the NDP will be supporting this bill so it heads to committee, in hopes that major improvements will follow, but major improvements do need to come to make this bill worthwhile and reflective of the realities that we face across Ontario. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Indeed, it was a pleasure for me to listen to my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River talk about the Local Food Act.

But I want to give you a good example about local food that I see every day. We're very fortunate in my area to have Kawartha Dairy. You know, you can go to Kawartha Dairy and buy three bags of 1% milk—\$3.99. If you do Peterborough math, you figure out that's about \$1.33 per bag of locally produced milk in my area.

If you go into any grocery store across the province of Ontario, you've all seen the displays about it, Speaker: Red Bull Energy Drink. I looked at the price of them just the other day. I was doing a little shopping last evening. I think the price of one can was, like, \$2.59. You consume Red Bull Energy Drink to make you play sports better, perhaps function better in the Ontario Legislature if you have a couple of those. But if you do the comparison, if you look at the value of that milk from Kawartha Dairy, about \$1.33 versus \$2.79, \$2.59—I think you've got to drive the point home that there's way more value and energy in consuming that 1% milk, which we all should do each and every day. So that's a great example of

having the consumer go out and buy a local product in my particular area that comes from Kawartha Dairy.

If you look at northern Ontario—I've had the opportunity to tour the Little Clay Belt in New Liskeard. It's a fabulous area for agriculture—a lot of locally grown food. I know the member there, of course, does a great job promoting that each and every day. And of course, the Greater Clay Belt is on the Quebec side of the border. But it goes to show you that even in northern Ontario, you could have a very vibrant agricultural sector. The plowing match was held there several years ago. A number of local markets—take the opportunity to buy local produce. But tomorrow, just compare Kawartha Dairy versus that energy drink. Kawartha Dairy is the better value every time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm glad to rise to speak to the comments of the member from Kenora–Rainy River. It's interesting when she talks about this government and the bureaucracy doing nothing for agriculture in the north. I don't think you have to go that far before you see the issues.

In eastern Ontario, a common complaint—even this summer, it took pressure from our party to get them to even tour the area to see the effects of the drought. There are serious problems. Going through Renfrew county, they're still feeling the effects, loss of hay, and even in our area. Although the corn and soybeans were bumper crops, anybody who was raising beef is having severe problems. There was no hay crop, so there's a shortage of hay. Of course, as everybody knows, or at least farmers know—I guess maybe the government doesn't know—we can't look at grazing for another month or two. This is continuing to be a problem. Farmers were forced to sell off their breeding stock to survive the winter. The cost of hay, of course, is at an all-time high. So it just speaks to the problems.

This bill does nothing to address the need to discuss the issues with the stakeholders. I think, when you look at the map outside of Toronto, this is not just something that has happened over night. It's still there, but it has been happening over more than a decade now. They've turned to other parties, because they don't see any hope with this government here.

We talked yesterday about the importance of having your own food supply and making sure that it's secure. We don't see that here; we see other provinces where farmers point to. In my riding, it's the province of Quebec, how much of a better job they do. I would like to think we can do things better in Ontario, and we've always shown that, but we may have to see some changes in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's indeed a pleasure and an honour to stand up and talk about the speech just made by my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River. She may be a relatively new member of the House, but she seems to have mastered it quite well.

I listened to her, and she raises points that are unique, I think, to her geographical area in the province, where she represents people we euphemistically call the Far North of Ontario. But the reality is that it's not that far north. When you think about other places in Canada—I have travelled to Yellowknife; I have travelled to Whitehorse. You can go there and see in the summertime people growing crops to eat. It's a short growing season, but there's a lot of sunlight, and if you are careful in what you grow and make sure that you plant it after the frost and harvest it before the frost, all kinds of vegetables and things can be produced. As she stated, there is no reason why, with some help, some of our First Nations communities in the north can't have better nutrition.

1610

It was my honour at one point to go on a northern tour when my colleague from Timmins–James Bay had a revenue-sharing bill before the House. One of the people on the tour was the now Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable David Zimmer. I told him that he was about to get the biggest lesson of his whole life in terms of northern communities. I didn't take him into the houses where the people lived. I didn't take him into the streets or watch the barking dogs. I took him into the Northern store, and he was absolutely shocked and appalled at the costs of everyday food that people had to pay, like \$3 for an apple or the same for an orange, or the kinds of things that we take for granted in the city of Toronto.

I think that we all need to understand in Ontario that if we are going to improve the lives of people in those isolated First Nations communities, we have to have the better things that my colleague was just talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 36. I have some comments on those comments that were made earlier by the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

First of all, let me say that I think there are three elements to this that we're being asked to consider when we're being asked to support this bill, which I do wholeheartedly. One has been mentioned by a previous speaker, that being food security. You'd like to know within your own jurisdiction that you've got enough food and you've got access to food to be able to look after your own population.

We know that if we can get more people in Ontario to buy Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables or anything else that's produced on the farm, it's much better for the environment as far as the impact on greenhouse gases, transportation and those types of things.

We also know that if we can improve the market in Ontario, if we can get more people in Ontario, when they make those choices at the supermarket, when they determine which apple they're going to buy, which peach they're going to buy, to go out of their way a little bit to look for the Ontario produce—if we can get people to do that, what that is going to do is increase the sales of those

people in Ontario who grow those products, those being in the farm industry.

We want the residents of Ontario to be able to eat the local food that is grown here. I think that in the past attempts have been made to do this and they've met with quite a lot of success. I think most members would be familiar with the work that we've done for the craft brewers, for example, for Ontario brewed beer, for the wine industry, closer to home for me in Oakville, certainly just down the highway a little bit into the Niagara region. I think we've done a good job in promoting Ontario wines. It seems to me that we can do exactly the same thing here for local food.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Really what we're talking about, when we think about local food and we're making changes to legislation around local food—we really need to look, in my view, at two aspects. We need to look at marketing local food to people, which is good in a lot of areas of the province where we have that local food to market. But another big part of that is improving access to local food, as I talked about at length. What we really need to do is, we need to focus on giving people the tools so that they can then provide that local food for themselves. There has been a fair bit of discussion around the price of healthy food or even just the price of junk food—the price of food in general—on many First Nations reserves.

One thing, just as an aside: When I was elected I quickly learned that in living in northwestern Ontario just outside of Dryden, I live in southern Ontario compared to many, many communities in my riding. It's a different perspective altogether.

So it is a concern. It's probably one of the biggest concerns that I have since before being elected and it continues to this day, and that is access to quality food and how that's linked to the health of our aboriginal populations. What we need to do—and I'm not going to point the finger at any particular government because we all need to do it. We need to come up with legislation that affects Ontario as a whole—not bits and pieces of Ontario, not the urban centres of Ontario or just the GTA, but all of Ontario.

I have yet to see legislation that has come forward since I've been elected that has really impacted and been thoughtful and cognizant of the challenges right across this province, including many of the far north communities. We need all governments to step up, and we can start with this legislation today.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2013.

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't know whether that draft was to pay for gas plants or whether it was to pay the members—

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no. It's to pay your salary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, to pay the salaries of the members. I know the members, like the Attorney General and the Minister of Education and consumer—all the members here, whether in the third party or the opposition, we've all earned our money. I know they're doing an excellent job; I know they deserve to be paid.

It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act, 2013, that was introduced by the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Agriculture has a central role to play in the health of Ontario's economy and is something that this government can no longer ignore.

The value that agriculture creates in the rural economy of Ontario makes up over 13% of Ontario's GDP. It's a sector that contributes some \$3.4 billion annually to the provincial and federal revenue stream. Moreover, the value of wages and salaries tied to Ontario's farming sector is estimated to be over \$7 billion annually.

Agriculture in Ontario is a big business. It has deep roots and requires an approach from government that recognizes the modern, advanced business environment that many farmers now operate in.

When Premier Wynne announced that she would be acting as her own Minister of Agriculture and Food, she noted that she would have a steep learning curve. As a lifelong resident of Toronto, Premier Wynne certainly has her work cut out for her in grasping the dynamic agricultural file.

In the past, this important portfolio has been served by some of the most senior ministers of the crown. I might add that during the Davis government, the role was filled for a number of years by the venerable Lorne Henderson, the member from the old riding of Lambton county. Minister MacCharles, across the aisle—I know she knows the Henderson family well. I might add—it's not in my notes—I'm also working on some background information and that to include Minister Henderson in the Agricultural Hall of Fame in Lambton county.

As the Liberal Party leader and Premier of the province of Ontario, many farmers I've spoken to in

Sarnia–Lambton have wondered aloud when and where Premier Wynne will find time to devote to the diverse group of stakeholders in the agriculture industry. Many worry that their issues will be sacrificed for the more glamorous issues that attract the media and the attention of the voters in the GTA. However, despite her inexperience after just about a month on the job, Premier Wynne set out to prove her naysayers wrong with the introduction of Bill 36, the Local Food Act.

As someone whose riding contains a large rural constituency and who has been working with agriculture for a number of years, I was certainly curious when the Premier announced she would be introducing this legislation after such a short time on the job. But after reading through Bill 36, I am disappointed to say that the Local Food Act is lacking in the substance, bold ideas and advancements that the Sarnia–Lambton agriculture stakeholders were looking for.

Upon originally hearing of the Local Food Act, I thought it was possible that maybe the Premier had adopted the strategies to fight hunger that I had laid out in my own private member's bill, entitled the fighting hunger with local food act. That bill, which will be introduced again shortly, would help communities in Ontario and food banks with the alarming growth of food bank use by Ontario residents.

The fighting hunger with local food act—which, again, I was very optimistic would appear in the Premier's Local Food Act, and, if it gets to committee, maybe we can have it included there—would have provided a tax credit for farmers who donated their perfectly healthy and nutritious unused produce to local food banks.

This is an idea that has had widespread support from members of the third party. I see the member from the Beaches applauding. He spoke in favour of it, as I remember, the last time it was introduced. I had support from the government side of the House and, of course, from my own colleagues. This is an idea, as I said, that had widespread support. In fact, it was highlighted in the 2012 Environmental Commissioner's report as a great opportunity for Ontario to glean some very nutritious food for Ontario's needy from the mountains of food that I say is wasted in Ontario each year. Unfortunately, that was not part of this act.

1620

When reading through Bill 36, I also hoped that the Premier would have adopted some of the very forward-thinking ideas that the member from Oxford laid out in the Ontario PC agricultural paper titled Respect for Rural Ontario.

With a title like the Local Food Act, the most obvious idea that the Premier could have borrowed would have been creating regional food terminals. The Ontario PCs believe that creating an additional local food terminal in Ontario—at least one, possibly in eastern Ontario, and one in southwestern Ontario—would help promote Ontario food and ensure that our retailers and restaurants and, by extension, consumers can connect with the small

producers and processors in Ontario to find the very best produce locally. This would be a great addition to the Local Food Act and would help shorten the distance that our local food travels before consumption.

As an example of how food travels through the province, let me talk about a local business that operates in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton and in the Minister of Health's riding of London North Centre. The business I'm talking about is called Sunripe. Sunripe is a terrific success story, and its stores in London and Sarnia highlight the outstanding quality of produce that is grown and harvested in Ontario every day. Let me read a short excerpt from the London Free Press about a regular day for Sunripe's owner, Will Willemsen:

"It's only noon but Will Willemsen's day is winding down.

"That's because he was up before 2:30 a.m. to do his buying run at the Toronto food terminal.

"The early hour allows him to snap up the best broccoli, the tastiest tomatoes and the prime pears.

"The produce is packed up, trucked away and will be on the shelves of his stores later the same day.

"It's been Willemsen's routine two or three times a week for the last 30 years since he opened his first small Sunripe store in Sarnia."

That's in the London Free Press of November 25, 2012.

This is a perfect example of a situation where the Premier and her government could have adopted some of the Ontario PCs' bold ideas in our agriculture white paper, like regional food terminals. By creating regional food terminals, say, in London, the Local Food Act would benefit local farmers and grocers by giving those in that region more immediate access to the best food and produce that Ontario can produce. Reduced fuel and transportation costs could be passed on to consumers. Increased access to restaurant owners and buyers could help grow local farms. It's a simple idea and it helps to reduce the distance that our food travels from the farm to our table. Again, this sort of bold idea was not in the Local Food Act.

Finally, and probably the most concerning to farmers in Sarnia–Lambton, is the fact that the Local Food Act does nothing to reduce the burden of red tape that Ontario farmers face when doing business in Ontario. Over 30 pieces of overlapping provincial legislation govern agriculture in Ontario. The average farmer, according to our records, spent 154 hours last year filling out government forms. That's time away from their families, their livestock, their crops, their equipment and from doing the things that can actually help them grow their business and produce the best products possible.

I hoped that the Local Food Act would include these important provisions. This would help reduce the burden of red tape and the maze of ministry branches and government agencies that farmers must deal with in Ontario.

Most of the content of Bill 36 is simply about the new Premier grabbing headlines in rural Ontario, where her party has lost its relevance. By simply rehashing policies

of the McGuinty government, the Local Food Act as it is currently constructed will do little to actually grow Ontario's ag industry. Those members on the government side of the House claim they are part of the new government. However, their claims ring somewhat hollow since they seem to be reusing a lot of the old policies of the old government.

The central truth that the Liberal government continues to miss is that agriculture as an industry supports our province's overall economy. It's an economic engine that creates jobs in every corner of this province, from our farms to rural communities to processing plants in big cities.

Over the past decade, the Liberals have made deliberate decisions that have damaged our agricultural industry. Every day we see farmers and agribusinesses struggling to compete because of high taxes, skyrocketing energy rates and a thicket of red tape. These are concerns of the industry that are repeated around the province.

I'm hopeful that the Local Food Act makes it to committee and then that the Premier and her government will seriously consider making those types of substantial amendments that the industry stakeholders are calling for. If not, the Local Food Act will be just another example of this Liberal government's disinterest with the real needs of Ontario's agriculture industry.

I might add—I have a few seconds left—that it was in the 1980s that the member who I spoke about formerly, the Minister of Agriculture, Lorne Henderson—he wasn't agriculture at the time—led a drainage committee study, a select committee appointed by the Premier at that time, that made radical and long-awaited improvements to local drainage. And the success of agriculture in Ontario—all across Ontario, to this day—is the benefit of that select committee and the members from all parties who served on that. I don't think there's anybody in the House right now that would have been there, but I know I read the report—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Jim Bradley—he might have been a page then; I'm not sure. But anyway, thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm delighted to stand and comment on the speech just made by my colleague, the member from Sarnia–Lambton. I was absolutely delighted to find out that he wants to bring back his bill which would encourage farmers to receive a tax allowance for those crops that might ordinarily go to waste.

I remember the debate that we had in this House some number of years ago now around this very issue. In this province, we have food banks in literally every town and city across the whole length and breadth of Ontario. In those food banks, very often the thing that is most missing is to have fresh fruit and vegetables, and then to see farmers forced to plow those under is really a crime. I do know that in the food bank in Toronto, which is ably run by my friend Gail Nyberg, who lives in the riding of

Beaches–East York, they are constantly looking for not only food, but they're looking for money in order to buy fresh produce. That is something that is disastrously missing from the diets of people who live on the margins.

I do know myself; I have attempted to live on what's called “the welfare diet” on three occasions. The first two times they gave me money and I was able to buy some forms of fresh produce. The third time I went on the diet, though, they gave me the basket. The basket, if you go into the food bank, is what you get to subsist on for seven days. The basket contained no fresh fruit or vegetables at all. I will tell you that at the end of one week of eating canned food, unhealthy food, pastas, things that are heavy in carbohydrates but not much nutrition, you would appreciate what the member from Sarnia–Lambton is intending to do.

I look forward to him bringing back that bill so that Ontarians—or the poorest people—can live better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Sarnia–Lambton for his remarks. He focused a lot on the fact that the Premier of Ontario—Premier Wynne—is also the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I'm sure that he's well aware of this, that Dennis Timbrell, who was the MPP for Don Mills, was the last agriculture minister in the Bill Davis government. They share the same general area of the city of Toronto. I'm sure that the honourable member, Mr. Timbrell, had served the Ontario rural community and farmers quite well, just as the Premier is currently doing at this point.

It's disheartening to sit here and listen that the member opposite says that our government has lost its relevance in rural Ontario. Well, I can tell you that perhaps to the Conservative friends, that's what they're hearing, but we're hearing otherwise. Our agricultural community is actually quite pleased by the support that they've been getting over the last number of years.

The Risk Management Program is something that was well welcomed and well appreciated by our farming community. We continue to strive and work at ways to improve our agricultural sector.

We constantly hear about high hydro rates. I spoke to this yesterday. These are challenging times, but I can tell you that in the year 2003–04, when the party opposite froze hydro rates, it cost Ontario ratepayers \$4 billion in one year, so I think that they should look at themselves before they throw stones.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: My almost-seatmate in front of me from Sarnia–Lambton spoke very wise words. It's always nice to hear him get up and speak and talk about a government that's out of touch, if I use the words across from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

It's a huge part of our economy—\$3.4 billion—the second-largest contributor to the economy in the prov-

ince, but sadly, it's been forgotten by this government. We see that. If you look at the results of the last election, it's shown that people in rural areas are very disappointed with the actions of this government, and they are looking for help from other parties.

It's no wonder; I guess the empty motions of the new Minister of Agriculture—issued the tire tax that came out just recently with no consultation with the ag industry. It was huge. We heard numbers of over 2,000% increases, which is really unheard of, but those are the types of things—a new tire tax affects the farming industry in a big way. It probably shuts down any of these businesses that are close to the border, because they'll just go elsewhere. In my area, dealers have called in and said they notice the difference already; they go into Quebec to buy their equipment, where they don't pay the tax.

It's too bad. We have our critic from western Ontario, Mr. Hardeman, who's worked hard with the industry and worked on the risk management plan that the Liberals were shamed into adopting at the last moment, just before the last election, but it's too little too late. I think the agriculture community is looking for more from the government and hoping for better things in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The Local Food Act is extremely important, as many members have said before, and something that we do know is that the number of farmers across Ontario is falling. There are not as many farmers as there were years ago, and if we're going to have a sustainable local food production industry, we need to do more to make farming more viable and attractive as a career opportunity for young people.

Part of the Local Food Act—it's good that it's opening up conversation, but if we want to continue to have good local food production in Ontario—all over Canada, as a matter of fact—we have to make sure that we promote farming as a career that's viable, that is a career that you can make into a lifetime career, and sustain yourself and pay your bills and be comfortable in retirement. That's something that we believe: If we're going to have a Local Food Act, we need to promote farmers to continue the Local Food Act, so that we can make sure that it won't be a situation where we won't have locally produced food, and we won't be able to enjoy the benefits of the people who work in that industry.

The government should make it easier for young people to pursue careers in farming by looking at perhaps creating a new apprenticeship program. It would be wonderful if young people could go on-site and work side by side with farmers—get to know the career, get to know what they're in for. Then, hopefully, they will choose that as a lifelong path to prosperity in their own lives, because we know that farmers are very valued in our society, and we want to make sure we continue that path so that we're not stuck here in Ontario looking to export food and having to eat food from other countries. I would prefer to eat locally homegrown food in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Right off the get-go, I'd like to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and also London–Fanshawe for their kind words and comments on my remarks.

I just saw the Minister of the Environment; I spied him across the hall—across the Leg. We talked about a number of people that he would remember—he's got a little longer history than most of us here—the Honourable Lorne Henderson, the Honourable Bill Stewart, and of course Helen Johns, Dennis Timbrell and Noble Villeneuve. We're talking about some agriculture ministers in the past from the Conservative caucus; that, by no means, is a list of all of them.

I was speaking about the Tile Drainage Act and how important it was to Ontario. I see the minister smiling. He knows how important that was to Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, it was a great career move for the former member from Lambton. I'm proud to have succeeded him here—a few years later, obviously. Anyway, he was a great friend of my family and myself, as well.

Also, as the member from Beaches–East York talked about, I am going to introduce my food bill again. It is a real crime that every year in Ontario over 27 million pounds of food goes to landfill or is plowed under when there are people going wanting, children and families that would enjoy that food here in the bigger cities. In the smaller towns like Petrolia we have food banks, and also in Sarnia—the Inn of the Good Shepherd, among others. Even the farmers—it costs them money to dispose of this food, which they would gladly part with. My bill talks about a 25% non-refundable tax credit, which is very affordable. The spinoff on that, I think, was \$6 for every dollar we'd invest, a minimal investment on the part of the government—around \$250,000, if I remember right—which would generate this food.

Again, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to have had an opportunity to stand and speak to this bill today and I look forward to it getting to committee where we can make those kinds of improvements to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today to speak on Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013. It's an interesting bill because it gives us an opportunity to talk about a lot of different issues that revolve around food. It goes without saying, but food is one of those necessities of life. When we start talking about local food, it opens up the debate to talk about the benefits of nutrition and its impact on our society. We can talk about what a sustainable province or a sustainable community looks like. I would contend or I would assert that a sustainable community is a community where you can grow and eat a lot of local food. The more you're able to do that, the more you can demonstrate that that community is sustainable.

This bill would give us an opportunity to look into that, but there is a problem when you look at the pur-

poses of the bill. I'm reading from the front page. The purposes are quite good, I have to admit.

"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.

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

Those are great purposes. Those are great goals. This act, though, doesn't provide the substance to actually achieve these goals.

But let's talk about some of these goals. My colleague from Kenora-Rainy River spoke on this issue very ably. If we want to encourage local food, one issue is promoting it, but a second issue is creating the conditions so that people can actually grow food in their communities.

There are two parts to that. One is that we have to look at what incentives we're creating for farmers, what conditions we're creating so that farmers can actually make a livelihood off of farming. Second, we have to look at awareness. In our school curriculums, we know the impact of nutrition on children, on their success in schools. One of the most basic things, and we can point to all sorts of studies that confirm, is that when we talk about kids in kindergarten and starting off in school, there is a rise of attention deficit disorder and kids who aren't focusing and children who have a problem performing. There's a clear connection between the type of food that those children eat and their ability to be successful at school.

My sister was a kindergarten teacher and she just informally encouraged the students in her class and spoke to their parents and encouraged them to make sure that the kids had healthy snacks, and discouraged sugary snacks. She found, just colloquially in her own classroom, that by encouraging good foods in her class she immediately noticed a difference. Children in her class were more focused, were able to perform better, were able to be better students in the classroom, and it was a simple shift in just encouraging the parents to have better snacks that weren't so sugary.

1640

If we look at what we're doing as a province and we talk about health promotion, often the slogan for creating a healthier society is about making the healthy choice the easier choice. If it's easy to be healthy, people are more likely to do it. If you look at the type of foods that are available in our grocery stores, there are packaged foods and there are processed foods. They take up the vast majority of any given supermarket, and the fresh produce section is quite small in comparison. So we have a lot of work that we can do.

There is an interconnection between these things. If we promote a strong and vibrant agricultural sector in our province, if we make the conditions more favourable for agriculture, for farmers to get out there and to earn a livelihood farming, and we increase the production of locally produced foods, we can encourage those to be

sold in our local grocery stores. That could have a positive impact on health. That would impact children in education, but it also would impact our health care system. There's an interconnection between all these issues. Sometimes you look at an issue and think that it's only going to impact one area, but there is so much that could be done if we see the connection between all things.

We're in a particular circumstance now in the province where we have a struggling economy; we have fiscal realities that we have to address. If we looked at ways of addressing these cost issues by combining our approach—so if we want to reduce health care costs, we invest in providing good, nutritious food and making access to this good, nutritious food easier so that we have a healthier diet. Diet can prevent a number of illnesses, and it would reduce our costs in the health care system. So there are investments that we can make that would reduce our costs in the long run, and this is one of those examples.

If we make a real investment in encouraging local foods and making healthy, fresh produce more available, we can impact our communities and our societies on many levels. We can have, on the beginning of our society, on our youth—we can encourage young children and students to be more successful and more productive because they can eat better foods. But on the other end of the spectrum, we can ensure that we have an aging population that's healthier, that has access to good foods so that in their aging, in the later stages of their life, they don't rely on the health care system as much because they're healthier. So there are a lot of things that we can do if we really focus in on this.

The idea of having a Local Food Week is a good start in terms of encouraging and promoting the fact that there is local food available here in Ontario. What is somewhat of a concern is the fact that the Local Food Week that's proposed is the same week as the agriculture awareness week. Depending on how that's framed, it shouldn't take away from the issues that affect farmers. Their issues are more than just promoting local foods. There are many issues that farmers face, and they should have a time and a week to be able to promote their issues and their concerns. So I'm concerned about the framing of that. If it's going to overlap, will that take away from the ability of farmers to promote their issues and their concerns, like the eco fees which are increasing in a way that's causing a dramatic impact on their financial viability? We have to look at how we can address that in a way that helps farmers out but at the same time maintains, obviously, our commitment to protecting the environment. At the same time, if we're promoting local food in a way that works synergistically with Agriculture Week, that's fine, but if it's taking away from the message and farmers can't get out their concerns, I'm troubled by that.

If you look at the direction that our province is headed in—and I noticed that in my community, in Peel region, we have suburban sprawl. We have suburban communities that are sprawling out, and they're taking over

some of the great farm land that was out there. So we have to look at, as a province, what do we want our province to look like? What do we want our agriculture sector to look like in the future? If we continue to sprawl into communities and into areas where there is great farm land that can be very productive, that can ensure that we have local produce—we have to make sure that we do develop policies that discourage sprawl into areas which are good farm land and that we make sure that our cities are planned around that.

Another idea that I think is essential is that, all too often, we are cutting out areas that can produce food. Our communities are all commercial or industrial or residential, and they don't have green spaces where you actually can grow food. I think that we create a disconnect, then, with our ability to grow food and where we live, and I think integrating those and having spaces in our communities where we grow food—we see the connection between the land and the food that we produce, and we see that in our communities, to make them more sustainable, there should be spaces in each community to grow food.

One of the things that wasn't touched on in the Local Food Act is the idea of community farms, local farms, using green spaces in our communities to grow food, to grow produce, and integrating that, in terms of education, with young people in our classrooms: teaching children about farming techniques, teaching them about nutrition, showing them the connection between growing food in a sustainable way and eating that food and being healthy and the greater picture.

The education curriculum in Australia includes a section that talks about healthy eating, and they actually have a component where they talk about reading food labels and about the benefits of fresh produce over packaged fruit.

Starting with an education component, we can build a movement where we say sustainable societies are based on having a connection between your community and the ability to grow food; that local food makes your communities more sustainable; that if we promote and encourage local food, we can have communities that will be healthier in the long run; that we'll have a more vibrant society, and we can do that by expanding the discussions and looking at the connection between having good nutrition, having good food and the impacts on the rest of society.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to have two minutes on this particular bill. I know it has been discussed for quite some time, but I am pleased to add to the remarks made by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I call it the LFA, the Local Food Act, which is a wonderful piece of legislation proposed by our Premier, Ms. Wynne. It goes a long way to bringing to our attention the products that we have in Ontario, especially from our farmers.

In my own area, I have to say, coming from York West in Toronto, that we don't have any more farmland

available. But a couple of weeks ago, I was approached by a member of the Delta Family Resource Centre, and because they know the value of fresh local food and produce, they said, "We have approached the city to see if we could use a portion of Islington Parkette to plant some vegetables for the community." I said, "What a great idea, but you have to approach the city for that." "Well," they said, "we're coming to you because the city already said no." I said, "That's strange, because if you go one mile west of here, we have allowed it at Black Creek Pioneer Village," which is a wonderful place to visit. I said, "We are already doing that." He said, "Oh, that's great. That's where I'm headed, and I hope that we get some land over there." I said, "What do you do with that?" He said, "We just leave it open for people to go and pick up the produce when they are ready." I said, "That's a great idea."

So there is interest out there, Speaker, and I hope that this bill, as it moves along, will come back much stronger and will highlight the wonderful products that our people are producing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to join the discussion today on Bill 36, the Local Food Act, and to comment on my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton's speech. It's so nice to hear an urban member talk about the value of the agriculture produce that we have here in Ontario and to promote places for produce to be grown in the cities as well as—even in my small communities, they kind of like these community gardens because they get to socialize with each other and, I'm sure, share the stories of how you can grow your beans or your tomatoes better. I think it's wonderful that the knowledge is being shared.

He did mention about more education in our schools, and I think the member from Peterborough will agree that Lloyd Wicks, a farmer from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, was always a strong promoter. In fact, he wanted to take kids out of the city schools for a week and bring them to the country to stay on a farm so they would understand how things are grown, the value of keeping agriculture a strong industry in the province of Ontario. It's not a bad idea. I don't know exactly how we'd do that yet, but it is important.

1650

You also mentioned the value of good nutrition, and the kids' attention in schools when they are well-nourished. We have wonderful food programs in our schools, and a lot of our farmers donate food to those programs. But it is true, and the quality—I know the DHA factor in milk was always brought up. If you had that in the early formative years, there are tons of studies of how that improves the cognitive ability of infants.

We have a lot of great innovation here in Ontario. We'd like to certainly spread the good agriculture story throughout. Unfortunately, this bill is really not helping the farmers in their production or even expand internationally, which we need to see.

I appreciate the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and his interest and his advocacy on behalf of Ontario farmers.

I'll look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: There has been a lot of discussion this afternoon, and really since this bill was brought forward, about a lack of clear targets and a lack of clear goals. In many respects, this is a plan to enact a plan. It's very vague.

One of the things that isn't included in this act is a buy-Ontario commitment that would make it the law that Ontario's money is spent here in Ontario. This would encourage food processors to purchase local foods. Since being elected, this is something that I have been very supportive of, not just for across Ontario, but even when you look at Kenora–Rainy River. I talk a lot about how big the area is. The point that I have been trying to raise—and I've even gone as far as creating some "I Love NWO: I Shop Local!" bumper stickers that people have been driving around in the riding. It hits home that there are a lot of market factors that are beyond our control at the local level, but we do have a tremendous buying power, and that can be used to do some real good.

One of the places that we can best direct our resources and strengthen our local economy is by supporting our local farmers and our local producers. If we don't support these local producers, who will? I think that's our responsibility, as MPPs at the local level. I think it's also the responsibility of our government, collectively, to make sure that we help our industry right across this province; that in addition to having a responsibility to create the factors that attract business, we also need to maintain that business too, whether it's everything from electricity rates, which are instrumental to some industries, all the way to helping make sure that our farmers have a market. We need to do that in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton did an excellent presentation this afternoon.

I just want to quote from a recent edition of the Ontario Farmer. I thought it was very interesting. It says:

"Burford-St. George apple growers Jay Howell and Tom Pate delighted in grilling a succession of 10- and 11-year-old pupils from Brantford and Brant county grade schools who passed by them and their grinding equipment.

"The kids were learning how to make apple pumice for cider. They were among 850 children taking part in the 18th annual Bite of Brant agriculture education program at the Burford fairgrounds on April 10 and 11" of this year.

"As each stood in line bearing an apple and waiting for a turn at the crank, Howell and Pate took turns asking them repeated questions about the fruit that has brought their families a livelihood for generations and St. George

local fame for its annual AppleFest, and the cider they make for area stores and restaurants.

"Apples need what out of the sky?' Howell asked" one of the students.

"Right, sun and rain,' he repeated. 'Sun for photosynthesis. Say that word again'

"Pate had his questions ready.

"What does the bee do? Pollinate, right,' ... and if the answer was correct, he let the pupil place the apple and turn the crank.

"Grade 4 student Phoenix Henhawk said he has learned that apple cider can be made out of almost any variety of apple, 'but that Empire apples make it'"—the most tart and are the very best.

"Teacher Ginny Goldspink was right there with her split Grade 4/5 class from King George Public School in Brantford, observing the farmers as they delivered hands-on lessons.

"She was one of several teachers who have worked with the program over the years.

"Bite of Brant is a real joy for the kids and a good learning experience. Already we've learned a lot about healthy eating,' she said of her present class. 'Now we're starting to learn about ecosystems, how plants and animals work together and how it's good for farming.'

"Jean Emmott, coordinator of the Bite of Brant program, as well as her army of volunteers from various sectors of local agriculture, and public and Catholic grade school teachers, were all smiles as they watched the 18th edition unfold with precision."

It's a great program for students, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to everyone who joined in the debate.

I hope the minister responsible for seniors will help his community members who want to set up that community farm.

I appreciate the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock recognizing my celebrating the importance of farmers. In fact, both of my parents come from farming families and farmed their whole lives, so I have a connection to farming, even though I don't live on a farm anymore. I lived on a farm at one point.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am, indeed.

Thank you very much to the member from Kenora–Rainy River for bringing up that point of Buy Ontario. I think that might be an initiative where we spend our Ontario dollars—whether it's provincially funded or provincially run organizations—and encourage those organizations to have to spend their money, and any food that's provided. It was an NDP plan that was promoted and presented before, and I think that's something that we should look at again. It might find its way into this bill if we have our input on it, because I think that's a meaningful way of encouraging local farmers to be able to get some buy-in and a way of putting some dollars behind our commitment.

Thank you to the Minister of Rural Affairs for also joining in the debate.

I think we have an opportunity here to gain a lot of ideas and to work on making this bill—because the ideas that it hopes to achieve are good ideas. The bill itself—I think it was put very well—is a plan to make a plan, but we can turn it into a real plan if we get it into committee and perhaps look at ways to make it more meaningful and make it work towards promoting an education platform for young people, promoting awareness about local food, the connection between local food and nutritious food and the health of our society and our communities, and looking at ways to make farming more viable, more sustainable in our community here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon to discuss the bill before us. Today we are here discussing Bill 36, the Local Food Act.

First of all, Speaker, a wee bit of credit is due, because the government has at least identified a crucial area that requires action: promoting our local foods in Ontario. Any of us who've had an Ontario apple or an Ontario strawberry at the height of their respective seasons knows that there is absolutely no comparison between Ontario-grown fruit and imported fruits. The same can be said for vegetables, and the same can be said for meats.

With such good food, such great produce, comes pride. Our local farmers, our local processors are proud of the food they produce. Nothing makes them happier than seeing it enjoyed by their friends, family and neighbours. It's that pride we must remember when crafting legislation such as this, because when someone is proud of something, they're always willing to talk about it. That's the essence of promotion.

In this case, when the former Premier prorogued the Legislature last fall—which in effect killed the first Local Food Act—in one way it presented an opportunity. It presented an opportunity—actually, a pretty rare opportunity—to take the bill that had been introduced and go around Ontario to all the different farmers, processors and associations, and all the advocacy groups, and ask them what they thought of it. In fact, it was an opportunity for the government to incorporate some of the opposition's points about the bill.

As you know, Speaker, I get the feeling sometimes that the members opposite in the government sometimes think we in the PC caucus would be mad or upset if they stole some of our ideas. I have to say, I, for one, certainly wouldn't mind—but I digress, although I did want to get it on the record so that members opposite know that we don't mind if you take some of our ideas. I say that because if they had addressed some of the concerns our critic the member from Oxford had with the previous version, then we would have a stronger bill before us here today.

The PC caucus even put out an entire white paper on this subject. It's called *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for*

Rural Ontario. I would sincerely encourage all members opposite to go online and read it. There are a lot of good ideas in there.

1700

But alas, true to form, the Liberal government decided they knew best and largely ignored our suggestions. And we weren't the only ones, as our critic the member for Oxford pointed out in his leadoff speech on Bill 36. He indicated no less than 81 specific actions or strategies that could have been incorporated into a Local Food Act, and yet the government only included one of these actions in this bill.

At its core, though, the intentions of this bill are good. Local food is something we can all support, and nowhere is this more evident than at the local markets and communities in Dufferin–Caledon.

There's a term that I like. It's when you describe someone as a "localvore." A localvore is someone who's committed to eating locally grown and produced food. A newer term perhaps, but the concept is very old. It is an appropriate play on words, I think, because all food can be local, whether it be meat, vegetables or fruit, and it can be grown locally. That's something we ought to support and encourage. Certainly in Dufferin–Caledon, we are big supporters of local food.

September is Eat Local Month in Caledon, which provides a perfect opportunity to celebrate the local food message as it draws attention to the many wonderful farmers in our region. Many of these farmers sell their products directly to consumers from their farms, and I want to share a perfect example of what I think local food is all about. There is a website, the Hills of Headwaters Tourism, where you can find the listings of many local farms that offer on-farm markets and pick-your-own operations in the community. I really like this example because it offers a practical and convenient way for residents to seek out local food options in their community.

It really is a shame there is not much more substance in Bill 36, because the premise behind it of promoting local food consumption really is an important one.

The one concrete thing Bill 36 does do is establish Local Food Week in Ontario. This is certainly a worthwhile endeavour. However, taken on its own, without any real support to farmers or processors who are grappling with problems like exorbitant tire fees and skyrocketing hydro rates, just to name two, it really isn't enough.

While I applaud proposing a provincial Local Food Week, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that this is already being done at the local level. The town of Caledon, for example, has proclaimed September 9 to 15 as Eat Local Week. This is a great opportunity to explore some of the excellent local food our region has to offer. And it's part of the reason I think the Local Food Week aspect of Bill 36 is a good one, because I've seen it done locally. In Dufferin–Caledon, we are very lucky to be surrounded by farmland, and every chance I get, I encourage everyone to enjoy the local fare and support our farmers.

Another great example of how much local food matters in Dufferin–Caledon is the establishment of Dufferin.Biz. This is a joint program between the county of Dufferin, Dufferin municipalities and local groups that is designed to market all the great things about the local community in Dufferin. And of course, you guessed it, agriculture and food are a big part of the community in Dufferin county. In fact, the Orangeville town hall was once the town's public market. Orangeville's main street, Broadway, would be lined with cattle every other week in those old days, with potatoes, hay, grains and many other agricultural products for sale. While these days have long since passed—the site of the Orangeville Farmers' Market is actually behind the current Orangeville town hall—they are still remembered in the carvings of the town hall. Carved cattle heads remain over the windows of the town hall to this day. I think these cattle heads are a great example of our history in Orangeville because they remind us that agriculture and food have always been an important part of our town's heritage and will continue to be an important part of our future.

That's why services like Dufferin.Biz are so great, because they help connect people with that rich history and keep traditions alive for future generations. Needless to say, local food is important to Dufferin–Caledon residents.

While I mentioned earlier our farmers who sell our products directly, I'd also like to point out what is probably the number one access point to local food for most people in Ontario: our farmers' markets. In Dufferin–Caledon we embrace local food, and our farmers' markets are always brimming with customers. Personally, I've always enjoyed shopping at the local farmers' market to buy our fruit and vegetables in season. It's a great way to support producers of locally grown products, but also to take in the beautiful weather and enjoy the freshness of eating seasonally.

They also serve as a good chance to spend some time talking to the vendors and farmers and learn more about their products and how they're grown. That's why you'll be able to make healthy eating choices for your families that you can enjoy in season while at the same time being able to thank those who work hard to produce that food for your family to enjoy.

The Orangeville's farmers' market opens May 11 and Caledon's on June 11. I know there will be a great turnout, as there is every year. We also have farmers' markets in Amaranth, Shelburne, Inglewood and, new this year, Southfields. Every year, of course, we have the local fairs in Dufferin–Caledon to celebrate our agricultural community as well.

I suppose the main point of what I'm trying to articulate here is that while local food may seem like a new trend or initiative, the reality is that at the local level, at least in Dufferin–Caledon, it really is just business as usual. Obviously, the government's attempts to promote local foods are welcome, no matter how much they fall short, but the reality is this government could do far more to help local food producers.

I want to share with you five reasons to eat locally that the town of Caledon actually distributes every year. It leads with "Taste and Nutrition," "Farmland Preservation," "Local Economy," "Food Safety" and "Sustainability." I couldn't have said it better.

We have done an excellent job within our municipalities and within our local governments to understand the value of what individuals do on the farm and to translate that into our new residents and our neighbouring communities so that they appreciate what we are able to offer because of the unique circumstances that we have.

In closing, I'd like to say to the Premier: It's a start; it's appreciated. But it's really just scratching the surface. That's why I would hope the bill will be amended at committee and be strengthened appropriately so that it can really make a difference in promoting local food in Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand here and to talk about G36, the Local Food Act, and to comment on the remarks made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon. She did a really good job of describing what local food means to the people in her community, about local farmers' markets, as have—I've been listening very intently to a lot of the speakers. I'm very interested in this issue. I've been listening intently to a lot of the remarks from people from all sides of the House. All the members have done a very good job of outlining what local food means to their region.

You could go on a fantastic food tour if you took all the speeches and picked out all the local food haunts and the local food processors and farmers' markets. You could go on a tour of Ontario like has never been done before. If there's one thing that bringing this bill forward again has done, it has allowed us the opportunity to talk about local food, to put plugs in for all our local places.

But the member also mentioned—and something that we're hoping to do as well—that when this bill moves forward to committee, we actually put some meat on the bones of this bill and actually make this bill so it helps—this isn't a first step in local food. Local food has taken huge steps already. What we want this bill to do is help local food, not simply be a promotional tool so the government can seem to get in front of the local food movement.

There are things we can do, and many things have been mentioned on all sides of how we could improve access to local food—certainly not the quality of local food; we have fantastic local food here. But access to local food is a big thing, and I think that's something, that we could all amend this bill to make it much better for all the people in this province.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say that I have very strong support for this bill, and I was glad to hear it from the member who just spoke because I think it's exceedingly important for not only our farming community, but our entire province.

Local food, of course, offers us a high degree of safety; we can't always guarantee that that food which is imported has that quality. It's also fresh, it's very tasty, we will find, and it provides employment. So I think it is exceedingly important to bring forward legislation of this kind.

1710

One of the members speaking previously mentioned agricultural land and the protection of agricultural land for the purposes of farming. A lot of people don't recognize that there's not all that much arable land in Canada. They say, "Well, Canada is a large country," but there's not that much farmland that's really available when you look at the entire country and how much is actually useful for farming in terms of the temperatures that are available—in other words, the climate—and the quality of the soils.

When I hear those who are advocating for the mindless development of good farmland, I become very, very concerned about that. I know that in years gone by I've watched in the Niagara Peninsula as very valuable farmland has been gobbled up by development. Where you have a microclimate that is special and where you have soils that are special, we've unfortunately lost a lot of that agricultural land.

Those farmers are top-notch farmers. They know what they're doing. They produce quality food for all of us. I think we have an obligation to go to the farm gate itself, if necessary, as many of us do in the local area, or to the farmers' market, or when we go to a major grocery store, to ensure that we choose food that is Ontario-grown. We cannot go wrong with that, and I think the member agrees with that as well.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here today and commend the remarks from my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon, taking us on a tour of Orangeville's farmers' market. We all have farmers' markets, especially in rural Ontario, that we like to brag about. I have many in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings, which is a very rural riding with great agricultural roots. The Belleville Farmers' Market will be opening soon; unlike my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon, I don't have the exact dates that they will be opening with me, but keep an eye out.

I can tell you that as I've toured the province as the critic for small business and red tape—and let's be clear that farmers are small business people, and some of them are actually quite large business people. The impediments that they continue to run into across the province when doing business are ERT—and that's not the emergency response team; that's energy prices, red tape and taxation. We talked a little about some of the atrocities in the Green Energy Act, and the Minister of Energy just spoke moments ago about the fact that we don't have that much agricultural land in the province anymore. We're losing it all the time, and these solar farms that they're putting up, in many cases, are covering agricultural land

where we should be growing local fruits and vegetables. So the Minister of the Environment is complicit in some of the agricultural property that's disappearing before us in the province as well.

Red tape: I can tell you that red tape is binding up our farmers and our agricultural people. They just simply can't get their products to market, whether it's wine growers in my riding, in Prince Edward county, who are growing grapes—they're doing a wonderful job putting some award-winning products out there on the market, if they can get it on the market. But that's the problem: They can't get it to market. There are some very serious problems with the LCBO.

We've talked about taxation. I know the member from Dufferin–Caledon spoke about the tire tax, but that's just the latest tax grab on our agricultural people in rural Ontario. We have so much to be proud about in the province. Let's encourage these people to grow more and add to our economy.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Dufferin–Caledon. What she had to say was insightful. People must know—I make no pretense about it—that I am a city boy. I've lived in this city my entire life. I admired what she had to say, especially about the town of Caledon and its five-point plan. I think that that is something that is divorced from many people who go to the supermarket and simply buy their food in cellophane containers, whether or not it's produced locally; it looks okay to them and they buy it. But when you have a five-point plan, as the member from Caledon outlined, where you start to look at the real necessity of feeding yourself, of having healthy foods, of transmitting that to your children, of having a sustainable economy, of having people work, and how it's all integrated into the community—I'd like to take my hat off to her for bringing that up, but more so to the town of Caledon for coming up with that plan that is taught, that is part of the school curriculum, that is part of everyday people's lives, and for sharing that I thank her, and I look forward to your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our questions and comments, and we return to the member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I really liked your "let's put some meat on the bones" for this legislation. It's pretty thin gruel right now, and I think that through amendments—well, I know through amendments, if they are adopted, accepted, that we can do a much better job of actually having a substantive Local Food Act.

To the Minister of the Environment, I trust that you will be supporting my private member's bill that I introduced yesterday that actually will enforce the use of recycled aggregate so that we can stop the constant need for only virgin product.

Prince Edward–Hastings, Beaches–East York, thank you for your comments. They are appreciated.

I'm looking forward, in less than a month, to starting to eat seasonally, eating locally, with the possible exception of squash season—sorry, squash producers. My children, on the other hand, last year, the memorable line as we were going through many, many meals of asparagus, finally said, “When does asparagus season end?” So even they understand that as a family, we eat locally and we eat in season and, like I say, with the exception of squash and asparagus, we are very happy to do it.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I had not actually intended to speak today, but I have been listening to people talk about this bill and talk about the necessity of healthy food to the point that I felt compelled to actually stand up and say something on this act.

You know, as I said in my last two-minute hit, I am a city boy. I grew up not four kilometres from this very building in a place called Regent Park. We grew up in a whole group of apartment buildings. There was very little green space other than the baseball diamond where we went to play baseball. That's where I call home.

I remember learning about agriculture. You may find this strange, but I remember learning about agriculture in public school. We were taught all kinds of things in our science class, which I still remember to this very day. At the time, I thought it was kind of strange that I had to know the difference between a Holstein and a Guernsey cow by the look of them, where you look at an Angus cow versus some other kind of beef cow. We were told about Clydesdale and Percheron horses versus thoroughbred horses. We had to pick out pictures of how they looked different. We were told about agricultural products that were produced in Ontario, how and where they were grown, the type of soil that they had to come from. We were constantly amazed that you grew tobacco in the sandy soil around Delhi, Ontario. All of that was done in the school system in Regent Park, in Cabbagetown, in the centre of downtown Toronto.

That is really what I knew about agriculture, other than the one year they put us all on a bus and took us down to the Royal Winter Fair, where I actually saw up close, for the first time in my entire life, a goat and some sheep and some cows and some horses and actually smelled them. It was kind of a unique experience for a boy from Regent Park, because although I had seen some of those things on farms in close proximity to Toronto in those days—and remember, when I grew up as a boy, most of Scarborough was still farms. You didn't have to go very far from where I grew up, maybe only a few kilometres east into Scarborough, to see whole farms under production with animals. Of course, there were fences around and you couldn't go inside, and hence my discovery at the Royal Winter Fair.

But that's where I grew up. I despair sometimes when I talk to young people today that they don't have that kind of education in the school, because I think it's an important education. It's an important education for city kids to understand where their food comes from, who

produces the food, why it's important to have that food produced in local proximity, what you're going to eat. The whole nature of our society has changed quite a bit from the time when we were primarily an agricultural community until that point that we are primarily today, of course, an urban community here in Canada.

1720

When my colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton finished speaking, I was surprised, because I did work in the immigration department, to find out he comes from a family of Jats. Now, “Jat” is a word in Punjabi, which confers to a group of farming communities from the Punjab. We had quite a conversation about that.

But be that as it may, I hope in my time as a politician over many years to have done something to help the farming communities. I think that this bill is an attempt to help them some more. I just want them to know that even a city boy needs to understand where the food comes from and the importance of a community to be self-sufficient.

Many countries around the world which are not self-sufficient in food find themselves eventually in bad circumstances. As countries go away from self-sufficiency in food, they find that they have to import it. They find that if the crops or something goes bad, they have to import huge amounts of food, often to their own detriment because they don't have that kind of money.

It's important that we continue, in the face of declining amounts of farmland because of development, to produce that food, and to make sure that the people who live here understand the importance of producing your own food so that in the event that something catastrophic ever happened, we would be self-sufficient and there wouldn't be mass starvation. You can imagine if there was a drought throughout the United States, from where we often import much of our food, as there was last year, but let's say there was a Dirty Thirties dust bowl, and those things that we have come to rely upon from California and from Arizona, those fresh fruits and vegetables in the wintertime, were suddenly not there. We'd better make sure we have that kind of food ourselves.

As a city boy, as a politician, I've endeavoured to do a number of things over my years. One of them was to set up the first farmers' market in East York. It's still going strong, and I'm very proud that we bring those farmers. They come every Tuesday for about six or seven months of the year. The same farmers that I organized to come on the very first day, now some maybe 15 or 18 years ago, are still coming today. There are lineups of people, and the appreciation of the people who live there to get those fresh fruits and vegetables right off the farm is enormous. Everything from people who sell cured meats to a woman named Hattie who makes wonderful jam, to all of the vegetables that come in in season, is there. The city people enjoy shopping there.

Most recently, and I had nothing to do with it, but in my riding, on the Danforth at West Lynn, there is a

wonderful farmers' market that is one day a week as well. The people line up. They bring their shopping carts, they bring their wagons, and they bring their kids. They talk to the farmers. There is a whole sense in our communities of tying oneself back into the land, of learning about the new vegetables, of buying those heirloom tomatoes. They look kind of strange, and all you see is the big, globular red ones in the supermarket, and you see some of these other ones with different colours. But when you taste, when you bite into them, you can certainly tell that it was worth it. Even though they may cost a little bit more, the taste is phenomenal.

The same is true about the homegrown garlic. I know; I've seen it in the supermarket. You can buy a sleeve of made-in-China garlic for a buck for four of them, big, big suckers. But if you buy one from a farmer in Ontario, you're going to get one that you truly are going to enjoy because the taste is phenomenal. It is grown locally. It is there. When you put that in your food, you can feel good about knowing how it was grown, where it was grown, that there's no improper chemicals.

I've also been involved in putting together market gardens in my riding, as a mayor, as a councillor and most recently, a little bit, as an MPP. We have them in a great number of places, including land that would otherwise just be fallow, where the wires go across—the hydro wires. Underneath those, we have market gardens, with people growing all kinds of wonderful food. We have them in some of the community apartment buildings which are rent-geared-to-income to teach people who are living with modest means how to grow their own fruits and vegetables and to live off those, how to can them and preserve them or freeze them in some cases to use them over the wintertime.

It's wonderful to watch their children, who really had no idea, actually see those plants grow and nurture them and water them and occasionally fight off the raccoons who come around to eat them, because that's one of the—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, the raccoons want some of that, too. It shows them some of the things the farmers have to do in order to protect their crops from wildlife.

It also teaches many of them how to grow those fruits and vegetables without pesticides, and I think this is a very important thing because you actually know the kind of food that you have produced and what went into producing it. You know that it doesn't have chemicals that could cause injury to you. You know that what you're eating, although it may have a blemish or two on it, is actually probably far healthier to you than that great big produce that you can see in the supermarket without blemish or mark.

Last but not least, it has been my honour over time to work with the food banks. As the member from Sarnia-Lambton had to say, we need to start helping the farmers to get some kind of a tax writeoff not to plow the food back into the ground. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people here who rely on food banks. If we

can give them even some fresh fruit and vegetables that would otherwise be wasted, it is an absolutely important thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to conclude, as a city boy: Thank you to the farmers. Thank you for feeding us. Thank you for doing everything you can for the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak in support of Bill 36. I'm also pleased to be able to follow my colleague from Toronto beach, because as urban members of this House, we know and we appreciate locally grown food because we know and have been, as a former mayor of East York—I recognize his work in our community in terms of local school community gardens and local food for our students, like he talked about the food bank.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to focus my short time about one of the purposes of the bill, which is clearly laid out: "to increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food." I know, as a former school board trustee, the importance of diversity in our schools. Many of my schools are now starting to create what they call school community gardens. Working with a local agency in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, one of the agencies, called CICS, is starting to build a community garden attached to this community centre. At the same time, they got funding recently from Trillium to create a community kitchen. The continued support of the kitchen through a community garden is the right thing to do.

The proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, will provide that opportunity, the seamless growing of food from the community into the kitchen and onto the dining room table, and that's the right thing to do. Our government to date has invested over \$160 million to support local food since 2003. One of the areas they focused on in the last couple of years is the school nutrition program. I know I have spent a lot of time, as a former school board trustee, supporting the school-based nutrition program, because it is the right thing to do. Recently I visited one of my schools, Silver Springs Public School; they have a community kitchen there to support the school program. At the end of the day, the kids know that eating healthy improves learning, Mr. Speaker. This bill will address this issue.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Valuable comments from the member for Beaches-East York, and I followed with interest some of his work in helping to develop a farmers' market in a highly urbanized area. The member and I sat together on the finance committee for many, many years. The member made no bones about his urban background but also his interest in agriculture and food production and consumption and marketing. We would get a diversity of presentations before the finance committee, and I did appreciate the member's interest in agribusiness.

1730

With reference to Bill 36, it attempts to address government procurement, and that's well worth pursuing and something that we also stand for. But I'm disappointed: no mention of agricultural education—or food education, for that matter. I used to teach agriculture at the high school level. There was a home economics department in the high school at that time. I found that many of my students weren't on farms, but they had the interest. In fact, in the years that I taught, it was optional and the student body grew considerably. They had that interest in agriculture. Many of them have gone on to be the best farmers in our riding. Many who did not own farms or were not directly involved in agriculture and ended up even, say, pumping gas, diesel, distributing fuel oil—they're talking to farmers all the time. Through our high school, they had a four-year course in agriculture and were able to communicate with their customers, regardless of whatever trade they were in or business they were in.

There are challenges that remain in agriculture—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thanks very much.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it's good to see that the member opposite has such enthusiasm that he didn't even notice the clock had run out and he continued to talk. It actually shows in the chamber how passionate people are about food. Listening to the member from Beaches–East York, I could hear the joy in his voice, how he spoke about his young childhood and his trip to the farm, through school. I also want to congratulate the member for being part of setting up the first farmers' market in his area. He certainly has contributed positively as a member overall, in his years in politics, to his riding. He continues to do so here in the chamber.

He also talked about how education is important—and I've mentioned this before, that we have to promote local food, growing local food. We have to promote the occupation of farming as a viable option and choice for children. I think part of doing that is not just in the high schools, but let's start in the public schools. There have been suggestions that public schools have a garden in the schoolyard. Let children learn as they grow their food, as opposed to waiting till high school. Start them young, let them understand where food comes from and how to grow a bean and a cucumber and a tomato plant, so that when they do have high school come, they're already familiar with the process. That could be an option that they seriously look at. If we don't continue the legacy of farmers, we're not going to be here talking about local food very much longer in this chamber.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the comments of the member from Beaches–East York. I'm excited by this piece of

legislation. I think it's absolutely timely and important, and I'm happy that we brought it forward, so much so that I actually tried and lobbied very hard with our whip's office to try and get 20 minutes, but that Ryan Singh, the new guy in charge back there, blew me off. He's in the back row there. Not only didn't he give me 20; he didn't even give me 10. So I've been left with about three or four or five two-minuters on it. I told Ryan I'd get him. Honest to God, it's the gospel truth: Ryan just didn't come through for me on this particular one. So I've got these two-minuters, and I've already used 30 seconds of my first two-minuter.

Speaker, I said yesterday that I grew up in a time, when I was in Port Arthur, where everybody, it seemed, had a garden. It certainly seemed like that. They blanched it; they canned it; they preserved it; they cooked it; they stretched it out. It seemed like it was there, and it lasted forever. It was healthy; it was nutritious; it was local; it was safe—all those things. We did it as a matter of course. It seems to me a little bit unfortunate that somehow we have to bring back legislation today to encourage people to go back to where we were so naturally 20, 30, 40 years ago. I'm not sure what changed. I have some ideas; if I had an hour, I could talk to you about those. But here we are with legislation that I think is timely and important. We need to encourage it again.

I'm very happy that contained in the legislation is a piece where we're going to work with provincial entities like hospitals, like long-term-care homes, like school boards, to encourage them to engage in local procurement up to \$25,000, where we can show a more tangible benefit to our local agricultural community.

As I said yesterday when I spoke about this out in Oliver Paipoonge, in Neebing, in Conmee, in Gillies, in O'Connor, I've got a huge agricultural community in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. They do great work. They all work under the umbrella of the Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture—a tremendous job. I hope they're as excited by this legislation as I am, Speaker, and I thank you for my two minutes.

Interjection: Give him another two.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd love it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Someone has to seek unanimous consent.

I return to the member for Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I think they should give you much more than two minutes. I just want to tell you that I wasn't supposed to speak at all today, but I seized this opportunity to stand up, as you can next, because all that's happening is that nobody's standing up for rotation. I would suggest you do what I did and just stand up, because if you have something to say about Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the farmers there, I think it should be on the record. So I'm asking you to please do that, just as I just did.

But to the others: To the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, I thank her. Haldimand–Norfolk and London–Fanshawe both talked about the need for education in the schools. I think it's a fundamental need, especially for city kids. I gave my own experience, and I will grant you, that was more than 50 years ago when I first experienced farm life at the Royal Winter Fair. That was my first experience until the time that I was nearly—I was in my fifties when I actually spent my first night on a farm. And that's the life of many city kids.

I think it's absolutely important that they get to understand what farm life is, what farming communities are, to wake up in the morning to the peace and the quiet—and the hard work that is involved and the danger that many farmers encounter. Because it is one of the most dangerous jobs in all of Canada; more dangerous than construction, more dangerous than police work or fire work is to work on a farm. It is no surprise that many of them are hurt over the course of their lifetime. We owe a great deal of gratitude to them for doing those hard jobs, for working with the land in order to make sure that we are self-sufficient.

So again, I would just like to close by thanking the farmers. I wish I knew more, but I have tried my whole life as a city person to understand, to appreciate and to say thank you for what they do.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan certainly has our blessing to speak for a 10-minute rotation. His own government is holding him back from speaking for a 10-minute rotation.

But I'm pleased to stand here today to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act. A Local Food Act should be, and could be, a good chance to help our world-class Ontario agriculture and food processors. But despite their amazing products, our local Ontario food producers and farmers have been facing some real challenges in recent years. Farmers and food producers are looking to us for effective legislation that addresses those challenges and creates the climate and opportunities for even greater success.

My riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is heavily dependent on a successful food industry. As a result, people in my riding know a thing or two about food and farming. Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is a regional centre for farm marketing, farm supply, dairy supply, grain elevators, livestock sale, farm machinery—and the list goes on and on. We've got the biggest community pasture in Ontario, and Kawartha Lakes alone is home to 1,500 farms and has the largest number of beef cattle in central Ontario. We've also got some of the most successful local food producers in the province.

I'm going to mention something that will bring pleasant memories to most people in this Legislature, and that is Kawartha Dairy ice cream. Kawartha Dairy's head office is located in downtown Bobcaygeon, and it ships delicious ice cream all over the province. I'm sure many members of the House—I could ask for their hands to be

put up, but I'm sure they've all tasted Kawartha Dairy ice cream. This year will mark 76 years since Jack and Ila Crowe bought a small dairy in Bobcaygeon and went into the dairy business, and I am proud to say I knew them both personally. At that time, they cooled their milk using ice from the lake and delivered it by wagon and boat in the summer and by sleigh in the winter.

1740

In the mid-1950s, Kawartha Dairy took the fateful decision to start making ice cream, a decision for which I think we're all very grateful. From their humble beginnings in Bobcaygeon, they've grown to eight retail stores as well as selling to a wide variety of wholesale customers, even in Toronto. You can buy Kawartha Dairy ice cream a couple of blocks from here. From retail outlets to food service establishments and, of course, the ice cream parlours that I mentioned—and the lineups at Minden and Highway 35 in the summertime are akin to what you'd see at Disney World.

Demonstrating just how leading-edge our Ontario businesses can be, the company now provides custom production services to other food companies, using the expertise that they developed over all those years to produce ice cream, juice and other dairy products. All the milk used by Kawartha Dairy is delivered daily from Ontario farms, supporting our local agriculture, and I would say the majority is from the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Another hugely successful food operation in my riding is Mariposa Dairy, and it has grown from a small goat herd in 1987 to a large goat farm and cheese-packing plant, creating employment and stimulating the local economy, and I know that they have sent this technology worldwide. Many who have tried their products say it's the best goat cheese that they've ever tasted. International experts agree, as their product has won numerous international awards at industry conferences throughout North America.

Bruce and Sharon VandenBerg and their employees at Mariposa are not content to be followers in their industry. They have developed and introduced technology innovations that have vastly improved the efficiency of their operations, winning them a Leaders in Innovation Award from the province. You can buy their cheese under the Celebrity brand in the grocery stores, and they even have chocolate goat cheese, just to give you a hint. They are but one example of the potential of the Ontario food sector.

Another is Pickseed, which is a world-class seed production facility. This company has had a successful track record going back to 1947 and operates throughout Canada and the United States.

We are an exporter in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock of dairy live, as well as genetics, beef and goats, and most people are shocked that that occurs, but we do export live and have for many, many decades.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, Lloyd Wicks is there—I mentioned him earlier—the member for Haldimand–Norfolk is saying.

My riding has also seen the development of the Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition, which has evolved from Kawartha Choice FarmFresh, which is a partnership of farmers, producers and retailers which promotes local food choice and consumption in the greater Peterborough and Kawartha Lakes. Of course, we have our Haliburton county farmers' markets. Brock township, in my riding, is a big agriculture producer too, and of course we have many, many fairs, which are too long to list, but I invite you to attend them all and will send you notices if you need them.

These local success stories in my riding illustrate the entrepreneurship, innovation and quality which we see every day in Ontario's agriculture and food production sectors—all positive stuff, but I have to say that this bill we're discussing today does nothing to really help our farmers. I mentioned that a Local Food Act could be a great help to farmers and food producers in the riding, but as several people have pointed out, this bill as it now stands just doesn't go far enough.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's okay. Ice cream will be supplied later in the west lobby.

Increasing government procurement of Ontario food is all well and good—nobody is against that—but farmers and farm processors were looking for a little bit more specific and profound and concrete action.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We've got amendments for you; don't worry. We'll be sending those ideas over to you.

Mr. Todd Smith: With the ice cream. Amendments and ice cream: They go together.

Ms. Laurie Scott: With ice cream, if that makes it slide down better.

Several key stakeholders—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association and others—have expressed their disappointment and believe that this bill should go further than promoting awareness and improving procurement.

It's lacking ambition, I have to say, but the bill does have other flaws too. Replacing Ontario Agriculture Week is a clear mistake. It has been mentioned several times that Bert Johnson had brought in Agriculture Week before. We certainly don't want to see that gone or disbanded.

The measures missing from this bill are exactly the type of ideas we have suggested in our food and rural affairs white paper, *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for Rural Ontario*. We need to create a regional food terminal, either in the east or the west—whatever is brought forth in discussions. We need to implement a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusiness. There needs to be a dedicated fund for the Risk Management Program, for concrete proposals that will help food processors and agribusiness and support our Ontario food system.

These ideas all came from listening to stakeholders in the sector, like our critic, the member from Oxford, did. He went around and asked them, and the government

could too; or we're willing to share those ideas, as been put out to the public in our white paper. But their absence from the bill is a little disappointing. We gave them lots of time. They had some time off. We gave them lots of ideas and time to put it in, in the bill that they introduce now that we're debating.

But this bill is a limited and unimpressive piece of legislation, and we need to do more to support our agriculture industry. It's much less than we were expecting, as I said, and it's much less than what the industry deserves.

So we need bold, innovative ideas to support our farmers, and the Liberal government has brought in policies and regulations that are actually hurting farmers. Ontario's food system and agriculture sector is facing a number of challenges that cry out to be addressed. This isn't a new topic to the Legislature, but red tape, could we talk about that some more?

Farmers have told us that government regulation and paperwork is a huge barrier to getting their work done and achieving greater success. I have billboards in lots of my agriculture stores throughout the riding that have just tons of permits—over-permitted to death. They need to be streamlined, and 77% of the farmers who were surveyed last year said that red tape was increasing. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and CFIB are saying the same thing.

Farmers have been negatively impacted by the arbitrary administration of the Endangered Species Act, which fails to consider the socio-economic factors associated with decisions and action plans. There's lots of record of me speaking on that topic in the Legislature.

But how are farmers supposed to engage in the kind of innovation that has made Ontario agriculture the best in the world when they have to spend all their time on paperwork? The number one thing I hear in the riding, no question, is about the red tape and regulation. Outdated, questionable regulations push small-scale food operations like abattoirs right out of business. I don't think there's a rural riding represented here that doesn't have abattoirs that have closed down. There's nothing that deals with that pressing issue.

And farmers, like many Ontarians, also suffer from the spiraling costs in hydro. The government's record of these inflated subsidies for power obtained through industrial wind turbines, solar panels—they've driven up the cost of electricity for not just businesses and farmers, but individual people. That drives them out of business, because they can't afford to do business in the province of Ontario. They don't have that extra money in their pocket.

So the member from Oxford and the party have put forward some concrete proposals in our rural white paper. We're willing to share them with the government opposite, and we're willing to debate this bill for as long as we can debate it here in the Legislature and take it to committee and make lots of amendments and improvements that are actually going to help the farmers of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to speak on the Local Food Act, and to comment on some of the remarks by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Although we usually spend time talking about our own riding a lot of times, I would like to salute Kawartha Dairy. Kawartha Dairy has fantastic ice cream. And for the folks in this House and the folks at home, do you know why Kawartha Dairy's ice cream tastes as good as it does? Because it's made from milk. If you go to your local supermarket or go to the frozen foods section, there will be ice cream, and then there's stuff that looks like ice cream.

Mr. Todd Smith: What's it made out of?

Mr. John Vanthof: Not milk. I always take fits if I see it in somebody's house. It's frozen dessert, but it looks like ice cream. Look at the packaging. It looks suspiciously like ice cream, and the deluxe stuff that's got, like, little pieces of chocolate bar or maybe chocolate bar, and that is supposed to be the crème de la crème. You pay big bucks for that, but it doesn't have milk in it. And that's one of the things that we should educate people on. On this side, we have no problem with people buying frozen dessert, but they should know that they're buying frozen dessert. That should be a big piece of any type of legislation, to actually demonstrate to people the difference between ice cream and frozen dessert or between milk and dairy beverage. It sounds the same, almost, but it isn't quite the same.

1750

Thank you for that opportunity, Speaker.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just have to say how much I'm enjoying the debate on this bill. It's wonderful to hear members talk about the good food that's growing in their own communities. I just wanted to stand up and talk about some things that are happening in London.

There's a young man named Andrew Fleet. He started an organization called Growing Chefs! We've heard a lot about the importance of education. What Growing Chefs! does is it goes into the schools and works with young kids, where they understand what's in season, and they chop the vegetables and make the salad and cook the soup, and then they have a feast and learn about local food. It's a wonderful program. I've had the pleasure of participating in some of his classes, and it's just a really good example of what we can do in our schools to teach kids that healthy, local food can be great-tasting food.

I also wanted to talk about the London employment centre. I had a meeting with David Corke, who runs the London employment centre, last week. In fact, he brought me some samples of shortbread cookies and sourdough bread that his students had made earlier that day. They help people who are out of work learn the food industry. They get their food handling certificate, they learn how to cook, and he places them in jobs. In fact, he's got a wonderful success rate. He said, "I've got two

pieces of advice. One of them: The Local Food Act is fantastic. You make sure it passes." David, I heard you and I'm doing my best.

There's one more that I have time for that I wanted to talk about, and that's the Western Fair market. The Western Fair market started just a few years ago, and it has become such an incubator for great local food. I'm sure my colleague from London–Fanshawe has been there many times. Businesses that are getting their start at the Western Fair market, where they sell wonderful local food, are going on and expanding their business. They're spilling out onto Dundas Street and Old East. We've got a wonderful new bakery there, Artisan Bakery. It got its start at the market; now it's a full-fledged bakery, open every day, on Dundas Street.

I'm out of time, but there's more to talk about.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to get up to comment on our expert on this side, our colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She always has an interesting story to tell about her riding and really about the success of the large agriculture sector. Of course, everybody knows Kawartha Lakes ice cream. I think I have to agree with the member from the third party when he talks about using real milk and real cream. That's starting to become hard to find in this province. It's hard to find, from the packaging, just what is real milk.

But the innovations in agriculture right across this province, in genetics, in techniques—we're just seeing a lot of changes over the years since I've been involved in agriculture, that's for sure. A lot of it has come from the local farmers, their ingenuity, the local fairs and the idea of getting together and looking for improvements.

I'll talk just briefly about neighbours of mine, the Vogel family. They're a large operation in beef, venison, milk, soybeans, corn, maple syrup, grain drying, trucking, excavation equipment and sawmilling—a small family of two boys and their father, Tony, who work very hard—long hours. Actually, they make you feel lazy being next door because they get up early in the morning and at 10 o'clock at night in the summer they're still working at it.

I go over and have a chance to talk to them, and they talk about some of the issues. Imagine, with an operation like that, the red tape that's in front of them. It takes them away from doing their work in the fields. With the price of hydro, it's just very hard. If they were half a mile down the road, they would actually get their power from Cornwall Electric, and it would be much cheaper because they get their power from Quebec.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, as I always try to do, because she is a voice of reason from that particular area of the province.

I just want to tell you my own Kawartha Lakes story, my own Kawartha Dairy story. They have quite a modern

store just outside of Bancroft. My parents, for many years before they died, lived in and around Bancroft. It was always a treat and a pleasure, on the way to see my parents, to stop at that store to buy ice cream. As well, on my way home to Toronto, I would often buy my milk there, not only because it was fresher; it was about the same price, and you knew exactly what was in it. I liked to give my money to a small independent group of people who were producing on the land, and I'd like to think that it was in keeping with the spirit of what we should all be doing: buying local.

Although I acknowledge that much of the milk that I buy in the supermarket probably comes from somewhere in Ontario, I know, as well, that with the huge dairy farms and things from Quebec, it could come from there, or it could come from anywhere—nothing against that, but I always try to buy local.

To the people who started Kawartha Dairy and the people who continue to work there, good for you.

I just wanted to say a few words, too, about her riding. The last couple of days have seen some pretty disastrous flooding, and I think that may be affecting or may potentially affect some of the farmers and farming communities in and around Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know that the York River has overflowed in Bancroft and in other parts. There's some serious flooding in and around the Peterborough-Lindsay area. Hang tough. I'm sure everything will be all right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I go back to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: See, everybody did know what Kawartha Dairy ice cream takes like. I must put in a plug: Their milkshakes are the best, in 100-and-some different flavours. It's unbelievably good.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, we'll just bring the truck down.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh, yes, they can come again.

To the community spirit of Kawartha Dairy, I'm sure they're handing out ice cream or doing whatever they can to help the victims of the floods that are happening certainly in the Minden area, because that's the type of people that they are.

We've got a lot of amendments, I think, that have come out of what I have said and what other members have said about this food bill that we're discussing today, to make it better. We all want to see the success stories continue and flourish in our agriculture sector. We'd like to see concrete targets, which aren't in this piece of legislation. We'd like to see them brought forward, because fluffy language and vague aspirations don't help our food industry, our farmers on the land.

I'm hoping that the food and agri-business sector does come to committee and does present the arguments themselves. I'm sure they will because—you don't have to take my word for it, although I am telling you the

truth—they are being hindered in the province of Ontario, as we speak, by provincial rules and regulations that are mostly outdated, that need to be modernized.

Let me tell you, the farmers are actually more advanced in the province of Ontario than the government's rules and regulations are. We need to have that symbiotic relationship with them.

I'd like to have seen some changes—and maybe they even will—in the tire taxes that have come down and hurt the agriculture industry. I'm looking at the Minister of the Environment: The ball is in your court. We'd certainly give you ideas, and I know our environment critic has done that.

The horse racing industry, which has been dealt a lethal blow—if something could be done for that world-class industry that we did have and is now in jeopardy in the province of Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the short time today I've had to speak on a large topic. I look forward to further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

POWER PLANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on Monday by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the minister's parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

1800

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be here and have five minutes to talk about the lack of an energy policy that exists with this current Liberal government in Ontario.

I'm going to give you some examples as to the lack of planning that has been occurring for the last 10 years when it comes to the energy file here in Ontario. Yesterday, we asked the Premier a couple of questions—many questions—about the cost of cancelling the Oakville power plant. She continues to stick with the fact that, in her estimation, it's going to cost \$40 million to cancel the Oakville power plant, when we all know—everybody in this House, including the Premier, knows—that it's going to cost far, far more than that.

If you take the numbers that came out of the Mississauga power plant, the Auditor General's report and the cancellation that occurred there, the number was \$180 million all along. The government was saying it was going to cost \$180 million to cancel Mississauga. The

Auditor General reported last Monday that it was actually going to cost \$275 million, so 45% more, as a matter of fact, to move the project from Mississauga to the Sarnia area. And we know that that was the cheap one.

The expensive one is the Oakville power plant, yet they're clinging to this \$40-million number. If you use the same formula that the Auditor General used to cancel the Mississauga plant and move it to Sarnia, that number should be in the area of anywhere from \$800 million to \$991 million, according to the formula that was used by the Auditor General.

What they're doing is they're moving the Oakville power plant, which was cancelled in 2010, and they're taking it all the way from Oakville—and we know where Oakville is; it's southwest of the GTA—and taking it all the way to eastern Ontario, just across from Prince Edward county, where the Lennox generating station is, which is currently using a gas and oil mix. It operates about 1.8% of the time; it doesn't operate very much at all. It's a rather large facility. What they're doing is they're taking the Oakville plant and they're putting it right beside this existing power plant at Lennox in the community of Bath. It's a stone's throw away. They're building a brand new power plant—gas-fired—in Bath, which is right next door to the Lennox one, which hardly ever operates.

What they're also going to have to do as a result of putting this brand new power plant in that area—which is, again, just east of my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings—is, they're going to have to create the transmission to get it to where the power is needed, which is in the greater Toronto area.

At the same time that they're doing this—they've made this decision to move this power plant from Oakville all the way out to eastern Ontario—they're still forcing wind turbine projects on an unwilling host community in Prince Edward county. These people in Prince Edward county have done absolutely everything that they can to get the message through to this current Premier and the former Premier that they're not a willing host community. The council has done everything it could possibly do. Community activists who want to keep industrial wind turbines out of the county have done everything they could possibly do. They've written to the Premiers; they've written to the Minister of Energy; they've written to the Minister of Environment; they've gone through the environmental tribunal process. But the government refuses to listen.

Why are we putting these little wind turbines up in southern Prince Edward county—and I don't mean they're little as in their stature; they're huge. But they provide a minimal amount of electricity compared to these giant power plants that are going to be sitting side by side just east of there and across the water. It makes absolutely no sense at all that they're forging ahead, forcing these on a community.

The most ironic part about it is that Oakville was listened to because they had a Liberal seat in that riding, right? They had a Liberal seat in Oakville. They listened

to the fact that Oakville didn't want that power plant. Why are they not listening to Prince Edward county? Why are they not listening to the residents of Prince Edward county? They're forcing wind turbines on them when now we're getting a power plant, at God knows how much money—anywhere from \$800 million to \$991 million, possibly. This entire scandal is going to cost us potentially a billion dollars. The worst part about it is that all they have to do is listen to the people of Prince Edward county. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, the member for Mississauga-Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, our government's commitment has been to be open and transparent. That's why our government broadened the mandate of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and that's why our government asked the Auditor General to report on the relocation of the Oakville plant. The Premier has agreed to appear before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, if asked. And while that work is ongoing, we've asked the Ontario Power Authority to provide an estimate to the committee of their updated numbers as soon as possible.

Now, you would think that the party opposite, the PCs, would actually want that to happen, but of course the Progressive Conservative Party voted against having the Ontario Power Authority come in as soon as tomorrow. So here's a point to ponder: The Conservatives don't want the numbers that they've asked for so that they can continue to complain about the fact that they don't have the numbers.

The Auditor General, however, has already reported on the Mississauga relocation. We thank him for his report. We accept his findings. The Auditor General will conduct another independent objective report on the Oakville plant, because it's important for Ontarians to have a full understanding of that relocation as well. But to be clear, the full contract—the full contract—for the relocated Lennox facility is a public document, and it has been since last year. Any notion that anything is being hidden is rubbish.

It's time to move forward now. It's time to ensure that we get energy infrastructure and the process around siting it done properly from the beginning.

We accept that this matter could have been handled differently from the start, and it could have been handled better. The Premier has said that. The minister has said that. Ontarians know that all three parties promised to relocate the Oakville gas plant—all three parties.

Because the PCs and the NDP made the same commitment, it's now incumbent on all three parties to work together to improve the siting of future energy projects, and also it's incumbent on the PCs and the NDP to provide the basis for the policy decisions they made in 2011. Give the justice committee your numbers. Give the justice committee your plans. Give the justice committee your justification for making your commitment to say that, as PCs and as NDPers, you too would have moved both plants, because candidates from both parties stood

up and said clearly, “We will move both plants.” It was in their literature; it was in their robocalls.

So everybody here agrees that no matter who had formed government in October 2011, there was going to be a cost for it, and the new government—in this case, the government of the party I represent—took an honest and transparent approach and negotiated the best deal possible. That’s what’s important here, and that’s what we need to focus on. We have to make sure that we have a better process in the future.

We’ve come a long way in the last 10 years. This province inherited a system from the Progressive Conservatives that was broken and neglected. While they were buying energy at upwards of \$2-plus per kilowatt hour, they were selling it back to you for 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour and putting a billion dollars on your stranded hydro debt.

But since then, we’ve built a clean, modern and reliable system that Ontarians know they can count on, and the energy sector is constantly evolving, especially as energy consumption habits and economic conditions

change. So too, our long-term energy plan must also evolve. That’s why Minister Chiarelli announced last week that Ontario will conduct a formal review of the long-term energy plan to be complete within six months. The review is going to be based on a strong and transparent consultation process with the public, with municipalities and with the energy sector. Our Ministry of Energy is particularly interested in reviewing our supply mix, how conservation can play a larger role, and how we can create a more predictable and stable clean energy procurement process.

We look forward to recommendations from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and we look forward to ideas on how to improve Ontario’s siting process for energy generation facilities. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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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

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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
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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
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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	
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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
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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
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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
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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
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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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	
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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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
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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
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
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