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Wednesday 3 December 2014

Mercredi 3 décembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 3 December 2014

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 3 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT
(AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE
ACT, 1996), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ASSURANCE
AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996
SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Beaches–East York.

Good morning. I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak to second reading of the Agriculture Insurance Act.

As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike, production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions. In Ontario, production insurance is currently available for nearly 90 different agricultural products, but Ontario farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. This leaves some farmers' products ineligible for production insurance.

If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would give farmers who produce agricultural products other than crops and perennial plants access to the insurance they need to safeguard their investments. This would level the playing field so that our producers could access the same kind of protection as every other farmer in Canada today. This would help to grow their farms and, in turn, Ontario's agri-food sector.

While serving as Minister of Agriculture and Food, Premier Wynne issued the agri-food growth challenge. It calls on the sector to double its annual rate of growth and to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. This challenge recognizes the significant opportunity that this sector has to

offer. It is an ambitious target, but I have every confidence in our ability to meet the challenge. As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I'm fully committed to growing Ontario's agri-food sector and meeting the Premier's challenge.

The agricultural sector is a cornerstone of employment and economic growth in this great province. It employs over 760,000 Ontarians, exports over \$11 billion worth of agri-food products and generates \$34 billion in GDP for the province of Ontario.

We're already making progress towards meeting the Premier's challenge. Between 2012 and 2013, Ontario's agri-food sector saw a 44% increase in food processing investment while adding 17,000 new and sustainable jobs. This is the kind of growth, on all sides of this House, we want to continue achieving, working in partnership with the sector.

To create future opportunities for growth, farmers need business supports that allow them to compete in national and international markets. Just as farmers and agri-food innovators are evolving with the industry, so too must government assist them in their day-to-day needs.

The proposed amendments aren't a new idea; rather, they're an evolution of a concept that has been in development for over 50 years. The amendments we're proposing now are the next phase of that evolution. In 2013, more than 14,000 farmers in Ontario had production insurance. Their policies covered five million acres of farmland and \$2.9 billion in liabilities.

Ontario's agri-food sector is strong, but not without its challenges. Agricultural markets are volatile, prices fluctuate and yields are at the mercy of many different factors. Our province needs effective business risk management programs in place to cope with these fluctuations and give our farmers the stability they need to grow and create more jobs in the province of Ontario.

A robust production insurance program is an important component of a well-developed business risk management plan, and making production insurance available to more agricultural commodities helps farmers manage the risks they face every day.

Mr. Speaker, expanding our production insurance program would also help us to responsibly manage the province's finances. When producers suffer losses, and don't have production insurance, it puts pressure on the province to respond with a direct, ad hoc program. We've seen ad hoc programs cost the province millions of dollars in a single fiscal year.

Production insurance is premium-based, the costs of which are shared by farmers and both the provincial and federal governments, which encourages best practices

and the appropriate sharing of risk. An expanded production insurance program could, if passed, provide similar financial assistance but divide the cost between the federal government, the provincial government and producers in an incremental way over a much longer period of time.

With the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act, both government and farmers would know each year what their costs will be. This will allow for better financial management and a predictable, stable support system for Ontario farmers. Even if we're surprised by a catastrophic event that negatively impacts farmers, our expense to address lost production won't change, and we'll be able to help provide farmers with the appropriate support. Production insurance protects both farmers and the government from unexpected costs.

Farm leaders whom I had the opportunity to meet with extensively over the last number of months have told us that Ontario's Risk Management Program is far superior to any other program in terms of assisting job creation, bankability and predictability for the agri-food sector. We continue to work collaboratively with our partners to make sure that the Risk Management Program is fiscally responsible and predictable to both government and producers.

Canada has a national suite of integrated and complementary business risk management programs in place to help farmers manage risks that are beyond their control each and every day.

We have recognized that production insurance plans need to move beyond just crops to include insurance for other agricultural products. The agricultural sector needs production insurance, not just crop insurance. This change will finally bring Ontario in line with the rest of Canada and fulfill a commitment that we made to farmers under the Growing Forward 2 program. We will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a national suite of programs that are effectible, predictable and, indeed, bankable.

0910

As my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said after the first reading of this bill, expanded production insurance "will mean the difference between paying the bills and losing the farm" for many of our producers in Ontario today. When farmers can't pay their bills, they also can't start growing and creating more good jobs for our province and, as I frequently say, they can't buy those Ford F-150s.

Production insurance is about protection, but it's about other possibilities. Expanding production insurance will be a valuable risk management tool for Ontario farmers. It will be a catalyst for growth in the agri-food sector.

We have a lot of questions to answer and a lot of work ahead of us to develop these plans. But as always, we'll work collaboratively together, and I want to make sure that all members of this House participate in this important debate. I've heard a lot of support from my colleagues here in the Legislature, and I'm indeed very grateful for that.

Ontario's agricultural sector has a huge potential for growth, and the Agriculture Insurance Act will, if passed,

allow for this growth to happen. Giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance will help them to manage risk better and encourage greater innovation, profitability and job creation in the agri-food sector.

I ask my colleagues to work with me to help my ministry enable growth in this sector by supporting the Agriculture Insurance Act. Growth in the agricultural sector would not only be good for this sector, Mr. Speaker, but good for the entire province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 40, our government's proposed Agriculture Insurance Act. It gives me special pleasure because it's my first official opportunity to address this House in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I was so delighted when Premier Wynne asked me to participate in that role, knowing how important the agricultural sector was to her, having kept that role herself when she was first elected as leader of the party. It's an important role, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to fulfill it.

I know that this act is extremely important to my constituents in Beaches-East York. Many people will ask, "Why would your residents be concerned about crop insurance? It's not like there's fields and fields of corn and hay in Beaches-East York." But the reality is, as I explain to people regularly, that as consumers we are very concerned about how food is grown in Ontario. That is a concern shared in Beaches-East York, and I'm delighted to rise here in this opportunity to speak to the bill today.

Yesterday, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke challenged this government to come forward with acts of consequence and significance that would raise the level of debate in the House. I'm sure he will agree, as all members will, that this is an important bill that deserves all of our support to help rural communities be more profitable moving into the future.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario farmers work diligently to produce goods for the benefit of Ontarians. Ontario farmers hope that the calculated choices they have made, paired with circumstances out of their control, result in favourable production yields and a profitable outcome. Production loss is one of the greatest risks faced by Ontario farmers each and every growing season.

Minister Leal did an excellent job explaining what production insurance is. I believe it will be beneficial for us all to now understand the history of production insurance and business risk management programs in Ontario and our steps in creating a new plan if these proposed amendments are passed. As Minister Leal said, production insurance is not a new concept. It's a program that our province has had experience with for over 50 years.

When our critics ask why it has taken us so long to expand production insurance to these new areas, they may not realize that we have been expanding production insurance to many crops and products for decades. Now we have the opportunity to take the next important step forward, including additional agricultural products in the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, before there was a suite of business risk management programs for agriculture, there was production insurance. Crop insurance, as it was then called, laid the foundation for a wide variety of business risk management programs that our provincial and federal governments provide today. Production insurance first became available in Ontario in the 1960s, after the federal Crop Insurance Act was passed in 1959.

Throughout its history, the key principles of production insurance have remained the same. Production insurance is based on participation by the federal and provincial governments and by the producers. It is based on shared program costs. It includes voluntary production, as farmers must choose whether or not to enrol in the program. They can choose the parameters of the plan that make the most sense for their individual business needs. Production insurance is administered by the province, not the federal government, so that decisions are made by the people who best understand the local land and its challenges. Most importantly, production insurance is based on actuarial soundness.

If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would allow more types of agricultural products to be eligible for insurance, based on the same key principles. Federal legislation established the national framework for production insurance, but within that framework, there is flexibility that provinces can use to modify the program and meet the needs of their respective farmers.

All provincial insurance plans are developed through consultations with the federal government, provincial government and producers. Each plan is specific to the product or commodity it covers and the risks associated with that product, be it corn, cucumbers, wheat, soybeans or sugar beets. If we are given the opportunity to develop more plans, we will work in close collaboration with farmers and colleagues in the federal government to determine how to best work within the federal framework to support Ontario farmers. When crop insurance first began, there were less than 10 commodities covered, but now production insurance is available to almost 90 commercially grown crops.

Growing Forward 2 is a five-year policy framework for the national agricultural and agri-food sector. It is an investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments, and it is the foundation for government agricultural programs and services. In 2013, the federal and provincial governments jointly developed a protocol under Growing Forward 2 that established criteria for the introduction of potential production insurance plans for livestock. Today, we are taking a very positive step forward making good on that commitment by continuing the evolution of production insurance in Ontario by offering the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act.

In 2003, the federal and provincial governments realized the current system of agricultural business supports in Canada needed to be refined, as programming was not suitable for Canadian farmers. Because of this, a single policy framework was created. From there, the agricultural policy framework was developed as a five-year

agreement. The framework has been very successful and has had its own evolution. The agreement was revised and renewed twice: once in 2008 as Growing Forward and again in 2013 as Growing Forward 2.

In the past and even today, Mr. Speaker, we have been reactionary in our responses to agricultural crises. When a crisis happens, we address it at the time and we provide adequate supports. But there's a better way to handle agricultural crises and producers' need for support. We can be more proactive and not always reactive. We may not be able to predict the events that negatively impact the agricultural sector, but we can be prepared to help if and when they do occur.

How does Ontario's current production insurance measure up to what's available in other provinces and other countries? Within Canada every province except Ontario has the authority to offer production insurance plans for agricultural products beyond crops and perennial plants, so expanding production insurance in Ontario would bring us in line with the rest of the provinces. South of the border, the 2014 US farm bill placed more emphasis on insurance and eliminated direct payments to producers. Expansion would help to level the playing field for our producers so that Ontario's agricultural sector can compete nationally and globally. The proposed amendments will, if enacted, put us on an equal footing with producers across the country and with many of our global competitors.

Now is the time to move forward with these changes and to do so with haste. Mr. Speaker, we know how we got to where we are today. The question that remains is, where do we go next? To develop and implement a new production insurance plan, we have work to do.

0920

Our first step would be at the operational level. We would develop a potential production insurance plan by working with Agricorp. Agricorp, as you know, is one of our crown agencies, which currently offers production insurance to Ontario's farmers on behalf of the federal and provincial governments. We would work with Agricorp and stakeholders to determine the needs of producers for that specific commodity. As with any type of business investment, the cost will be a very important factor to consider.

Production insurance premiums are designed to be affordable. They are cost-shared among the federal and provincial governments and producers. Farmers with all levels of experience, whether they are starting out or have been farming for decades, will have access to these production insurance plans. The majority of producers currently enrolled in production insurance plans are small to mid-sized family farms.

As with the existing production insurance plans, any new plans would likely have to include some type of minimum production levels in order to qualify for assistance. If a new plan were to be developed, we would work with industry to set production levels that make sense for the sector, and for producers and stakeholders in Ontario. Every step of the way, we would collaborate and consult with our stakeholders.

The development of any new plan would consider all segments of the agri-food sector to ensure any potential barriers to entry are identified and addressed. We don't want the cost of insurance to be a barrier of entry to farmers. New production insurance plans won't work or be beneficial if no one can afford them.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, expanding production insurance is the next step in the evolution of our business risk management programming for Ontario's agricultural sector. It helps farmers grow by giving them affordable, predictable and comprehensive coverage in the event of a disastrous year; it brings our farmers in line with the rest of Canadian farmers; and it allows the government to plan and manage its finances in a very reasonable manner.

I'm particularly delighted that we're bringing forward this plan now. As many of you may have heard before, I've talked about my grandfather Major General Arthur Potts, who was a professor of dairy husbandry at the University of Saskatchewan. Growing up, my grandfather would often talk about the risks associated in livestock moving forward, and I know my grandfather would be delighted that we're moving forward with a piece of legislation such as this.

Expanding production insurance is the right thing to do for Ontario farmers and all consumers, including those in the riding of Beaches–East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the minister's opening statement, and as well to the member from the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York, the parliamentary assistant.

This is a bill, as has been stated earlier, that amends the Crop Insurance Act. As the opposition House leader, I have a lot of meetings with the government. I was shocked yesterday that finally the government has started to think about travelling bills around the province. They have time-allocated every bill they've had, and finally, in a meeting yesterday, the government House leader indicated that he would like Bill 40 to have some travel time in January and February. I certainly support that.

I guess I'm going to ask a question, because that's what we do in these two minutes, questions and comments. I'm going to ask a question, Speaker, through you, to the parliamentary assistant. I hope he answers it.

I would like you to come to Kemptville for some of these hearings on Bill 40. You've allowed a decision to take place by the University of Guelph to close Kemptville campus. You've got thousands and thousands of farmers all across the province who want to grow the agri-food business, who want their sons and daughters to have an agriculture education that's close to home. If you're going to put an ag bill on the table, and if you're really truly committed to hearing from stakeholders, you will travel this bill to communities like Kemptville and you will allow the committee to see the good work that's

being done at that campus, to see what the future of agriculture can be with regional campuses that provide great education and also allow the sons and daughters of our agri-food community to go home to the farm on the weekend after they do their studies so that they can help out.

That's the type of agri-food industry that Progressive Conservatives want, and that's the type of consultation that I think Bill 40 needs.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House, but today it's a particular honour because talking about agriculture is one of my favourite subjects. I would like to talk on behalf of my caucus on Bill 40 and respond to both the minister and his parliamentary assistant.

I noticed that, in his comments, the parliamentary assistant said he was delighted and he was happy to be moving with haste. Well, this was first agreed to, to increase it to other crops, at a fed-prov meeting in 2003, I believe. This government, or variations of this government, have been in power for 11 years, and it was agreed to at a fed-prov meeting in 2003, and they are now moving with haste. As the minister was speaking, he quoted something I said in response to his ministerial statement. I said to the member from London–Fanshawe: "Is that a good thing if the minister quotes you, or not?"

They're moving with haste, because crop insurance, production insurance, is one of the cornerstones of our system. It has been in place for 50 years. We are behind the eight ball from other provinces. Once again, all the other provinces have this. This government's been in power for 11, 12 years, and they're moving with haste.

In following the House leader from the Tories, I hope that they indeed do travel with this bill because having meetings in Toronto regarding crop insurance—and most of our customers are around Toronto, I would agree with that, but only having meetings in Toronto regarding crop insurance would be utter folly.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to speak to this bill and to second the movement of this bill by the member from Beaches–East York.

I am elected from a riding in suburban Toronto, Etobicoke Centre. We saw recently—last year—what the impact can be of extreme weather events in our community. When I was knocking on doors during this campaign, I met countless numbers of folks who were impacted by the floods that impacted us. Actually, it was about a year ago, almost to the day, around Christmastime last year. Some people in my community were covered by insurance, but many weren't. Many thought they were covered, but it turned out that they weren't. So I can appreciate first-hand how important this bill is, and how important this topic is.

Business risk management programs, like production insurance, help producers deal with situations that are

outside of their control, like those floods I talked about, like weather, disease, and extreme market fluctuations, and make timely payments to producers and eliminate the need for costly, ad hoc responses to adverse conditions. By giving producers greater opportunity to access production insurance, we will help them better manage risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

Our agri-food sector is tremendously important, not just, of course, to those communities that are directly impacted by the jobs that the sector creates, but also to those communities that all of us live in, in all 107 ridings. And Etobicoke Centre is included in that.

I'm incredibly proud to be standing here today. I think this a responsible approach. I think this is a critical topic, not just for our agricultural communities but for all Ontarians, and I hope that we can count on the members opposite to support the bill as well.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm pleased to stand and provide some information back on the comments on this bill. I look forward to finally extending it over—I think as our member from the north in the third party said, it's been 12 years. I guess that is haste for this government.

It's interesting. Last February, I was at Chrysler when the Premier made the announcement of trying to generate more jobs in the ag sector, and I supported that. I think that's a great idea, because it is a sector that's strong, that needs some help. We're supporting this bill. But then I was shocked a day later, when I was at the farm show in Ottawa, to hear the rumour that they were going to close Kemptville college, one of the two English-language agricultural colleges in this province.

0930

My first thought, after hearing what she said—I said that this can't be true. But of course the next day at a noon, it was confirmed. It's hard to think that this government has any real direction in agriculture. One day they say one thing and the next day their actions speak differently. We see this over and over again.

We're really interested to see if they will travel around and talk to the agricultural community over the next few months. We have the opportunity over January and February, when it's a little slower in the ag industry; the farmers are available, the House is not sitting. We're encouraging them to get around and talk to the community and listen to how important other things in the ag industry are. If she really is genuinely interested in growing that industry, we're going to need well-educated farmers who attend local colleges that allow them to actually work during their college time back in their own communities. They've lost that in eastern Ontario, one of the major hubs, so let's see if they're willing to listen and actually take this around the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York has two minutes.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much, members for Leeds–Grenville, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Etobicoke

Centre and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, for your comments on the bill.

I am delighted to hear that we will be travelling this bill out. I look forward to participating in that and hearing from farmers all across the province. I wouldn't presume as to where the committee will be going—we'll leave that up to the committee—but I appreciate their suggestions as to where the committee should go and listen.

I particularly want to address the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. It's fantastic that he has pointed out that it has been 12 years. I'd like to point out, of course, that in those 12 years there was a different member for Beaches–East York. As he notes, the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York was commented on earlier. Maybe that was the big change in the last 12 years in this government, that there's a different member from the wonderful riding of Beaches–East York. I would celebrate that it has only been a scant six months since I had the pleasure of being elected to this House following the last election and being appointed as the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. Maybe that is the key ingredient as to why we're finally able to move forward with this—as you so rightly point out, it has been time—because the time is right, Mr. Speaker. We want to move forward on this bill.

In honour of my grandfather, a great member of the agricultural community in his own right and after whom I was named—he would be very proud to look down on his grandson saying, “Yes, we're moving forward on livestock plans for production insurance.”

Thank you to the previous member for Beaches–East York who, in his capacity, wasn't able to influence the government the way I have been able to for the great riding of Beaches–East York.

As we know, in Beaches–East York, farmers feed cities, but cities enrich farmers, and there's a very fundamental nexus, a connection between the urban needs from the farming community and the farming community's needs from urban communities. I have been able to make that connection between Beaches–East York and the wonderful agricultural communities which so many of you represent and many of my own colleagues represent.

Interjection: Two more minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can't say thanks to that.

Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity. Government members and the minister have actually given me lots of time. I thought they would have addressed this in more detail. However, this is a pretty short bill. In fact, all it does is change the name of a title. Let's call it enabling legislation.

We've been discussing this among our PC caucus. It came up several times yesterday, not only production insurance and the need for production insurance to expand to other commodities, but also the need for this government to do something about bee mortality, insurance for bees.

There's no question on expansion of production insurance, in this case changing the name of "crop insurance" to "agricultural insurance." It is long overdue to shove this into other agricultural commodities. There are questions being raised, and the minister acknowledged that. Questions are swirling with regard to the government's announcement to amend the Crop Insurance Act, 1996—I know there were at least two of us in this Legislature who were there in 1996—and to create this new Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

I support the views of my colleagues and the third party that when you bring in agricultural legislation, you do have to talk to farmers. You've got to get out into rural Ontario. We could have hearings in Etobicoke; we could have hearings in the Beaches—or the Beach. When I worked in Toronto, it was called the Beaches. Anyway, let's have hearings in Clinton. Let's have hearings in Kemptville. I've heard Kemptville mentioned several times. Down my way, let's have hearings in Delhi or Cayuga. Let's go up to the Clay Belt and have hearings in that part of Ontario.

There are questions to raise. I raised questions earlier on in my response to the announcement of this legislation. First question: Is there going to be a premium holiday? There are always the early adopters of any agricultural program. How do we encourage those who may not be convinced that this is worth them putting up the premium money, even though it will be supported under the crop insurance model by both the federal and the provincial government? How do we encourage farmers to buy into this new program when it is implemented? I assume it's going to be implemented. All we have now is a piece of legislation that changes the name of the old legislation.

How easy is it going to be for farmers to fill out the forms? Are they going to have to hire a chartered accountant? Of course, the very large farm operations are usually advised to use a chartered accountant anyway, but how easy will it be for farmers to forecast the amount of money that may be coming? That's something their bank will want to know. How easy will it be for farmers to forecast the timing of the payments? Can the payments be processed rapidly to get them into the hands of producers and get them there quickly? Will the calculations for this program be clear? Will they be transparent, easily understandable?

I used to buy crop insurance a number of years ago. I grew corn with my partner—corn, soybeans, winter wheat. I grew alfalfa. I always used crop insurance. The people who looked after us on crop insurance would come over to the house. It was a ritual, a tradition. You'd sit around the kitchen table. Les Van Trigt was my crop insurance agent, and he was just two farms over, actually, from my dad's farm, and four farms over from my farm. We talked about everything except crop insurance during those meetings. I trusted he knew how to work it out. He had my figures.

Crop insurance, by and large, over the years—we've had it for decades—has worked out well, so we can hit

the ground running by expanding this to other agricultural commodities, because we're building on a fairly firm foundation. But bear in mind that when you make a change to a system—it doesn't matter whether it's a corporation, a factory, a government institution—any change that you introduce into a system—I think there's management theory on this—has a ripple effect. It will affect other aspects, other facets, of the broader system. Bringing in production insurance, for example, for cattle may well have an impact on corn growers or the bean guys. It's a concern.

There's going to be additional money required from both the provincial and federal levels. Where does that money come from? We certainly do not want to see a situation where, to accommodate the extra draw from this program, especially if we had a disaster like BSE, or PED in hogs, we are going to be robbing Peter to pay Paul. Oftentimes, Peter has concerns about that, and even Paul, when it gets out of hand. It also raises the issue of, "Wait a minute. This isn't fair. This isn't right." We have to look at the big picture—again, another reason to support hearings.

I've certainly talked to livestock guys, cattlemen and pork producers about this idea. But I've also talked to the cash crop guys. I've talked to people who have the existing program.

0940

First of all, I'm not saying this will be a threat, but there's only so much money to go around. We know that in the United States, there is a concerted effort from the Obama administration to get a handle on the tremendous cost—a cost in the billions of dollars—of safety net programs in the United States. Two years ago, safety net programs in the United States came in at a cost of \$14 billion. Even in the largest, most robust economy in the world, \$14 billion for farmers is quite a draw. There were weather-related issues there and price issues. Last year, it dropped down to a \$6-billion draw. We as legislators, decision-makers within this government, have to be cognizant of where the money will be coming from.

But there's no question—and we in the PC caucus recognize the value of production insurance. It lends a hand, obviously, for farmers to deal with losses from natural events like weather, pests or disease.

As I mentioned, the production insurance costs are shared by the producers, the provincial government and the federal government. The farmer pays 40%, the provincial government contributes 24%, and the federal government contributes 36%. In my mind—maybe this is a guy thing—it's a fairly easy ratio to remember, 40-24-36. Just visualise that, Speaker. That's how I keep that ratio clear in my mind.

We know that in Ontario, production insurance is currently available for something like 90 commercially grown crops: obviously, the grain and oilseeds—that's corn and soy; winter wheat, tree fruit, grapes, vegetables, forage—members were just talking about forage a minute ago—and the specialty crops. Ginseng has been brought in. Honey, for example, is covered under the crop insurance program.

If we're now going to expand this to other commodities in the livestock area, this is breaking somewhat new ground, as Minister Leal just said in his opening remarks. We didn't get a one-hour speech, but we did get some opening remarks, backed up by the member from the Beaches.

A lot of questions still remain, and I do wish to raise some of these questions, Speaker.

One thing that first came to my mind was on the hog front: What about the big problems we saw a number of years ago with young hog farmers? They took a tremendous hit on the price front. We have ups and downs in the hog business. The young farmers, or the beginning farmers, who didn't have a track record, if you will—I think this was partly a federal problem—very simply, they didn't get the money. They lost the money, but under the structure of that safety net program, they were unable to be reimbursed. I know there are about 100 beginning and young hog farmers who have been very active on this front for years. They've been getting nowhere.

I think of the Bartels brothers down my way. I visited their hog operation. They had switched from dairy, brought in a tremendous amount of capital and built two very large hog barns—these are not inexpensive—to put up a brand new hog operation. Then they got hit with the low prices. They weren't compensated. Retired farmers, hog farmers who had retired a number of years ago—even hog farmers who were deceased—received money through that program. Our young, beginning, very technically savvy farmers were left out in the cold.

We're going to see this program available, ideally, to everybody if they pay the premium and they qualify, but you're not going to see retroactive pay with that particular problem.

Many of us have read the Auditor General's report that came out on Agricornp a number of years ago regarding the overpayments to farmers, in excess of \$24 million. It really is unfortunate when something like that happens. When that money is received, it usually gets spent right away; farmers reinvest back into their plant and equipment. The question is, is this going to prevent those kinds of boondoggles from happening? I will say that I have a lot of respect for Agricornp; they've had an awful lot of new programs dumped on them. They run a good shop, and they have made tremendous improvements, and quite rapidly, with respect to their response to the Auditor General's report.

My first thought was, "Is this going to be a whole farm program?" Again, we have the opportunity now; we're opening up that Crop Insurance Act from 1996. This isn't going to be like AgriStability, and we know AgriStability has just been separated out from business risk management. The focus is on animal producers, and it's obviously using the model of crop insurance.

Will it be margin-based? Again, there are other jurisdictions we can all look at to see how they've developed the programs. Manitoba has developed a similar framework. I went back, with respect to crop insurance—for many of us it's a fairly easy principle to understand. The

hope is that for livestock it will be similar. I think the assumption is that it's going to be similar to crop insurance.

I keep raising this question: Can the farmers do all the paperwork themselves? Do they have to hire an accountant? Let's make this program as straightforward as possible. Obviously, the larger operations have to run their books through an accountant anyway. On many farms, it's beyond the ability of somebody's husband or somebody's wife to be able to do the books with, really, the gigantic growth of some of the farm operations.

As I mentioned, is this going to pull money away from existing programs? Is it new money? My understanding is that this program will be funded by new money so, obviously, new money is coming from the farmers themselves. This is premium-based. The farmer contributes, and this certainly helps with respect to any challenge on the international front, if it's countervailable or what have you. We're in good stead there.

We look to other jurisdictions; we look to the United States. I've asked this question: Do they have livestock insurance down there? Nobody seems to know. I've asked the government side to take a look at this. I know there are some limited livestock programs in the United States for ranchers. My family raised cattle in California and in the high desert in Oregon, where there is no water, basically. In the spring there is, but you have to travel your herd a long way to find water. I know my cousin, every year, moves his herd in a big 70-mile circle. That's kind of going from Port Dover to Stoney Creek and maybe over to Kitchener-Waterloo. That's what he does. He and his son sit on horses looking for water.

California: the last time I was out there, the state caught on fire. It was unbelievable, and it hasn't gotten any better since. So there are US government programs for ranchers for drought, those kinds of disaster programs for livestock. They're federal government programs.

0950

I would like to talk just a little bit about what we do have in Ontario with respect to crop insurance, or production insurance. About 14,000 farmers in the province—this was, let's see, last year—signed up for crop insurance. That's insurance coverage for five million acres in the province of Ontario. That seems like an awfully large acreage. I know when we were actively farming, we had 600 acres—that's six farms, basically—at the time. Five million acres, that's significant for farmers. For the provincial government and the federal government to come up with a risk management program to cover the perils of the diseases, insects, fungus and nematodes, and weather-related events: hail, flooding, wet weather and that early snowfall that we had quite recently here—that's a lot of acres.

I think it's regrettable that this legislation has been introduced, and here we are debating it already. Meanwhile, the cash crop guys are still out there trying to figure out what to do with their snow beans. I guess I called them "snow beans." That was a Freudian slip. The soybeans, and many of the beans that I've looked at on

my crop tours, especially on the heavier land, seemed to only be about eight or nine inches high. But we had more snow than that on top of them, so they're done.

Corn: Sure, you've got all winter to get the corn off. That's the way we used to take corn off many years ago. But it has a very high moisture content. Some of it is just being chopped up for silage, for livestock feed. That's difficult to do down in the southwest, down Essex and Chatham way. There's not a lot of livestock down that way. So it's a very tough year for farmers right now as we speak.

We're in here in a nice warm building. This is the kind of work that, by and large, as Bob Bailey would say, is inside work and no heavy lifting. Our farmers, our cash crop guys, right now are out there in the mud trying to keep their combines going, trying to unplug their combines. Maybe they're lying on their back trying to pull out the main gear—and I've gone through all of this. We had to do that once: You're covered in mud, and the hydraulic fluid comes down on top of you. That's what they're doing right now. I don't know whether they've had the opportunity yet to really do much thinking about this new livestock insurance program and how that might affect those who are in the cash crop business or in the fruit and vegetable business. Many farms are trying to finish up before Christmas, and have an awful lot on their minds. Then of course, they will spend the Christmas holidays dealing with all the paperwork and the red tape and gearing up for income tax time.

So we do have a program. We've got a model to follow. It covers five million acres.

South of the border, they have a program. They have safety net programs. To give you perspective on Ontario agriculture compared to what's going on down in Ohio and Illinois and North Carolina and California: US crop insurance covers 295 million acres. We cover five million. Two years ago, the US safety net programs' costs came in to the taxpayer at \$14 billion. We have to set up our programs to ensure that we remain competitive.

When I would sell corn or soybeans—in the early 1980s, I was selling soybeans for about what farmers are selling them for right now. My price was determined by the Chicago Board of Trade. It's the same market. It moves back and forth across the border.

Here's a government that's talking about banning neonics on 80% of the acreage in the province of Ontario. They use neonics to grow corn in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, in those big cash crop states; the same with soybeans. We import corn and soybeans from the United States. We will continue to import corn and soybeans from the United States that are grown using neonics. We have to square that; we've got to deal with that. We can ban neonics on 80% of the acreage in Ontario, but does it make sense to bring in corn from our competitors who use neonics to grow it? How does that help the bees in Iowa? How does that help the bees in Illinois?

We do know that farmers, certainly hog farmers, have had their concerns, and they've long asked that production insurance—the plans—move beyond just crops and

include insurance for other agricultural products. The agricultural sector does need production insurance, not just crop insurance. As we know—and the members opposite have had 11 years to deal with this—Ontario is the only province so far that does not have legislation enabling this to happen.

I mentioned Agricorp. Production insurance is delivered by a crown agency in the province of Ontario. It's called Agricorp. It was set up by the Mike Harris government back in 1996, and it's backed by the crop insurance fund. The value of the fund fluctuates from year to year, obviously, depending on crop damage and the value of claims coming in. It depends also on the premiums coming in from farmers themselves.

I'll mention that crop insurance in the United States is administered and implemented, or dispensed, through private insurance companies. I think there are about 11 very large private insurance companies that do the leg-work with respect to the to-and-fro of crop insurance down there.

Like any large insurance program, Agricorp purchases reinsurance, private reinsurance. You need reinsurance, and anybody who has been involved in the insurance business would know that. I sat on the board of an insurance company for a number of years. It's a risk management tool. Insurance is risk management. Reinsurance is risk management for the insurance companies themselves or, in this case, the government—in this case, Agricorp. We have to protect the province. We have to protect the taxpayer from undue financial exposure.

Existing production insurance is triggered when a producer's actual production falls below their guaranteed production. We trust that this legislation will provide an adequate response if and when we have a real disaster.

BSE never did get into humans in North America, to my knowledge. I don't think it was over here; it was out west. We paid the price. I've lost half my cattlemen; I've lost half the cattle herd in Haldimand county over the last 10 years. In the province of Ontario, we've lost half our herd. The number of head has been cut in half. If something like that came through—we've all been discussing the recent statistics on bee mortality. Our pork industry and the PED virus—cold weather is upon us. That could trigger yet another onslaught of PED on our hog farms. We know that, to date, we've lost 30% of Ontario's pork-producing capacity because of PED.

We know that Ontario Pork, their organization, has stressed the need for the province to come up with some mortality insurance, or to at least look at their request. We now have this enabling legislation. It's not going to help those hog farmers, those young guys, those beginning farmers who got nailed back in 2007, but the hog industry, I would feel, would buy into this.

1000

It has to make a good business case to make it worth their while, of course, and they're going to want to see transparency; I think the minister made mention of the importance of stability in the program; and obviously bankability—the bank wants to know whether you've got

insurance coverage or not before they hand over the money. And all concerned need predictability as far as, when does the money come back and how much will it be. Again—and I'll repeat—we can't draw money from other farm programs to fund this one, and I feel I've been assured by the government this isn't going to happen.

If we follow that crop insurance model—we've been doing it for years and years. As I mentioned, Agricorp was established in January 1997 under the Ministry of Agriculture, and it covers a constellation of programs. I think perhaps we have asked Agricorp to take on too much in a hurry on occasion with so many of these ad hoc programs and business risk management. Certainly on this side of the Legislature, we all fought for that. I've said before that I attended just about every tractor rally across the province of Ontario during those winters that we were trying to get that one through.

We know that in 2008, Auditor General Jim McCarter concluded that Agricorp was having difficulty adapting to these rapid changes that were being imposed on them with the substantial growth in the number of farm support programs. There was a doubling of the annual support payments to farmers during that time. This challenged Agricorp's ability to deliver farm support programs in an efficient way, let alone an effective way, and in a transparent way.

So here we are; we've got enabling legislation. So far, all it does is change the title of the bill. As the minister admitted, Ontario is the only province without the legislative authority to offer production insurance for a wide variety of agricultural products. During the BSE time, this government had to come up with ad hoc money—that's not based on farmer premiums, by the way; that comes directly from the taxpayer—and they had to do it in a hurry, or we could have really lost—who knows? The whole industry could have collapsed. This came from the federal government as well, so that cost taxpayers something like \$130 million. This is a model where the risk, if you will, was shared by the farmer himself through premiums, again going back to that ratio, 40-24-36.

Ad hoc programs are not the best way to do it. You try to wrap them up as soon as you can—the plum pox virus program, for example. We need a better model, and we do have to work with farmers in the commodity organizations to make sure we do get this one right.

The new plan needs that kind of predictability. Farmers need to be able to forecast the amount of payments, the timing of the payments. In the event of another crisis like BSE, they'd have to know how much money is coming and the timing. They are keeping their creditors at bay, they are dealing with their banks, and we can do an awful lot through a good program to lift that load off the producers' back.

I sincerely hope this program doesn't morph into another gigantic red tape exercise. Farmers already face enough red tape as it is, forms to fill out, i's to dot and t's to cross. The calculations have got to be clear; they've got to be transparent. Participants need to get a detailed yet easy-to-understand statement.

The question remains: What commodities are going to be covered? We assume beef, cattle; we assume hogs; we assume honey bees. I just listened to the Minister of Agriculture, I listened to the parliamentary assistant present this, and there was no mention of bees. There is a need for bee insurance. Mortality insurance for bees—that's something the government can do. I don't hear any direct practical ideas; I certainly didn't hear it this morning, coming across, with respect to assisting bees.

What about racehorses? Will a program like this cover the horse racing industry? They had the carpet pulled out from under them, under this present government, ending the Slots at Racetracks Program, again, to pay for run-away spending on the part of this government. Horse farms have gone bankrupt. I've seen the for sale signs up and down in my riding. Horses have been euthanized. I don't know how many horses have been killed, the young ones hit in the head when they're born because they just can't afford to look after them over the years. Is this going to cover horses?

I was quite intrigued: The parliamentary assistant mentioned his grandfather's involvement. I think you mentioned the University of Guelph. I spent five years at Guelph; I finally graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College—I explain to people in my riding that I spent five years at Guelph because I was a slow learner, but I did get a master of science degree.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: People probably didn't hear that interjection.

The parliamentary assistant made mention of his grandfather. In spite of the tremendous growth in this particular city, for example, our roots are in agriculture. I attended the Ontario Agricultural College; my father attended the Ontario Agricultural College with a degree in animal husbandry. My father used to teach a bee-keeping course, actually, at one time. My grandfather attended the Ontario Agricultural College. He took the famous short courses, back in the day—that could be part of a resolution for this Kemptville crisis. My great-grandfather attended not the Ontario Agricultural College but the Ontario Veterinary College, OVC. We still have his black veterinarian's bag. I just use my family as an example.

We can get it right in the province of Ontario, because we have this tremendous background in agriculture in this part of the world—not just in my riding, down on the sand plain and the Haldimand clay, but we're blessed with the soil types, the climates, the microclimates, the know-how, the knowledge of mechanics and agronomy and the knowledge of how to deal with farm labour and machinery, not only turning a wrench on a combine, but knowing how to deal with a GPS system on the combine as well.

My time may be drawing a to a close. I wish I had more time. I guess I'll get to speak after we break. But I do want to talk a little about bees. I want to talk specifically, in the context of this legislation, about bee mortality insurance. That's something the government can do.

There's been lots of talk about bees, and it's been all talk. We have government for a reason. You have power, as other provinces have done, to bring in a bee insurance program. On our side of the House—I can't divulge what we talk about in caucus, but this came up on two different agenda items yesterday during our caucus meeting. We are very concerned about bee mortality. We in caucus have proposals. If I have time, I will walk through some of these proposals right now to help our beekeepers.

1010

I have a personal interest. On our farms, we've had bees for 38 years. Fraser McClung in, I guess it was 1976—I took over one of my grandfather's farms. He brought his supers in. This guy knew bees. He just recently passed away. That spring, the first thing we did was we went out and planted pussy willows all over that part of the farm. Pussy willows, as you know, come up very early in the spring. His bees came out and they needed food. He didn't put sugar through his hives. He was a naturalist. He was a fantastic guy.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Do they need acidic soil?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, this was on clay. Oh, pussy willows? These pussy willows did very well. These pussy willows are now 38 years old. I've had to cut some of them down. You just stick the shoot in the ground. It's like planting willow. They come up in the spring, as we know. One of the first things you see are the pussy willows. Bees like that.

We have a lot of black locusts on my farm. That's why he moved his hives to my farm. This is bee management. It wasn't monoculture. We have a lot of gully land. At that time, we had taken 200 acres out of production to plant trees, but the trees weren't up yet, so there was lots of goldenrod, lots of weeds. Bees love that kind of stuff. We probably need more weeds in the city to attract bees.

There's something every one of us can do—something people can do in Etobicoke and the Beaches: Let your front lawn go into weeds and get the bees in there.

If you want to do something about bees, let's do something practical. In the context of this legislation, let's do something practical to help our beekeepers.

We are aware that other provinces have bee mortality and overwintering insurance. Alberta has a program. Manitoba has a program. Saskatchewan is working on a program.

If I have time, I'll just mention the Manitoba program. They've recently, as in Ontario, experienced higher than normal mortality rates in the colonies that are kept over the winter. Manitoba had a tough winter. Many losses have been caused by unmanageable and natural perils, obviously weather-related losses—has anybody else here been in Winnipeg in the winter? It gets cold up there—and diseases with no means of adequate control. To assist with the financial burden of these uncontrollable losses, the Overwinter Bee Mortality Insurance program insures producers' bee colonies against unmanageable, abnormal overwinter losses. Think of last winter here in Ontario. Beekeepers have the option to insure their colonies at

high- or low-dollar coverage levels, and they're paid an indemnity—"indemnity" is an insurance term for compensation—to overwinter if the overwinter losses exceed the coverage deductible and the premium costs for this program. Again, here's this 40-24-36 ratio. They're shared 40% by the insured beekeeper, 24% by the province of Manitoba and 36% by the government of Canada. I have a lot of details on this Manitoba program.

Alberta has a similar program to Manitoba. They're looking after their beekeepers through an insurance program.

Here we are debating changes to the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996. We in the PC caucus ask this government to implement the Manitoba program or take a look at it. Take a look at the Alberta program.

If you're hesitant, take a look at Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is doing a pilot project. Saskatchewan is setting up a somewhat similar program. It's a three-year pilot to help their beekeepers. This is government helping beekeepers who are suffering very high mortality rates. The Saskatchewan program seems to be modelled on the Manitoba and Alberta programs.

So here's an opportunity for the province of Ontario to hit the ground running. We had tremendous losses—like I say, we've had bees on our farm for 38 years. Down in the Norfolk area—tremendous bee mortality back in 2007. There were no neonics then. I think it was crop-related. At my constit office, I got to know all the large beekeepers in my area.

I've just received word from our Speaker to wrap this up.

I will say that we in the caucus have had a lot of discussions about this production insurance program, and we think it can be made to work. The farmers seem confident that we, as legislators, and of course staff and Agricorp can come up with a good program. I just leave this with you—we've been discussing the bee issue over and over again, going back for the last 14 months—bring in a bee insurance program. It's a practical thing government can do for bee mortality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just before I break, I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for his extensive knowledge in agriculture. I found the bee discussion very interesting. Thanks so much, and it's great to have that kind of knowledge in the House.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today our page captain is Noah Westwater. I'd like all members of the House to say hello to his family. His mother, Susan Westwater; his father, Bruce Westwater; his sister, Brooke Westwater; and his grandmother, Carol Kirkwood, have all joined us here this morning. Please welcome them.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are here today at Queen's Park, as well as the members of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. There are a number of those members who are coming in the door right now. I wish that everybody would give a warm welcome to all of them.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome members from the Action, Research and Change Group to End Violence Against Women. We have with us Kathy Campbell, Leighann Burns, Paula Valois, Lee-Ann Lee, Michelle Moody, Eileen Morrow, and an anonymous survivor who has joined us here at Queen's Park. I want to thank them for all their hard work. Thank you very much. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I too would like to welcome the members of the Ontario Principals' Council, particularly John Hamilton—where did he go? I don't think he's here yet—the current president, a whole bunch of past presidents, and Ian McFarlane, who's the executive director, who's also lost in transit but I'm sure will appear. Welcome, all of you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome to the House Rebecca Little, who represents the University of Waterloo Federation of Students. Prior to going to school, she hailed from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It's a pleasure to introduce fourth-year University of Waterloo student Stéphane Hamade. He is here representing the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome to all of you who are here today.

Mr. Yvan Baker: There are a few folks I would like to introduce today. I'm honoured to have in the Legislature with us my father, Donald Baker. I wouldn't be here without him, Speaker, in more ways than one.

I would also like to thank our page captain, Maja Toman, and her mother and father, who are here: her mother, Aleksandra Glisic, and her father, Tibor Toman. Please welcome them.

I would also like to second the Minister of Education's welcome. We had a number of folks from the Ontario Principals' Council visit my office this morning: John Hamilton, the president; Jeff McKibbon; and Ian McFarlane. We'd like to welcome them as well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome a number of representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. With us this morning we have Sean Madden, Jasmine Irwin, Matt Hefland, Jen Carter, Roland Erman and Zachary Rose.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Dr. Eric Marsden from the Marsden Centre of Naturopathic Excellence. He bought, at a silent auction, the right to come here. I didn't mention that it was free anyway, but thank you and welcome, Dr. Marsden.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome—they'll be in in just a moment—a number of students from the University of Western Ontario PC campus association—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I knew that would excite the Liberals over there, Mr. Speaker—Ron Bertolo, Pamela Bialik, Marisa Breeze, Andrew Esser, Sophia Helpard,

Piercon Knezic, Mattheu Kok, Patrick Mair, Kayla Tiller, Landon Tulk, Alex van der Wal, Gregory Wilford, Jesse Wray and Richard Sookraj. I'd like to welcome those students as they come in the building.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to welcome the members of ARC—Action, Research and Change to End Violence Against Women—including some survivors, advocates and activists who are working for change. Some of the participants joining us today are Leighann Burns, Lee-Ann Lee, Paula Valois, Eileen Morrow, Kathy Campbell, Michelle Moody and other survivors. They are here for the release of their report on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd also like to welcome my cousin Richard Sookraj, who is here with the University of Western Ontario Conservatives. I don't hold that against him.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to welcome to Queen's Park a good friend of mine, Jim Karahalios. Jim and his family ran a fish-and-chips shop in Toronto for almost 50 years. I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome the members of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada. Today we have with us Marc Brazeau, the president; France Daviault, senior director; Jason Kerr, director; and members Diane Freeman, John Cochrane, Tony Canade, and Tony Del Vasto. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Jeong-sik Kang, the consul general of the Republic of Korea, who is accompanied by Deputy Consul General Sang Soo Lee and Consul Byungjun Kim. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: This morning my question is to the Premier. Premier, during his fall fiscal update, your Minister of Finance revealed that his revenue projections from just four months earlier were short by more than half a billion dollars. Your finance minister then tried to reassure Ontario taxpayers that he had the discipline to eliminate the deficit over the next three years. Then on November 18, we saw his real plan revealed when he refused to rule out once again raising taxes.

Premier, can you commit here this morning that your government will not be raising taxes yet again over the next three years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The plan that we are implementing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off. If anyone interjects, I'm going to stop them.

Please carry on.

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

The plan that we are implementing is a balanced one and it has been laid out clearly. It was laid out in the budget when we introduced it in May, it was laid out in our platform and it was laid out in the budget that we brought back to the Legislature after the election. It's very clear that we are limiting our spending, but at the same time we are investing in Ontario. We have committed to balancing and eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. We're on path to do that. We have overachieved on our targets.

The reality is that there is a revenue challenge that we're facing, but that makes it all the more important that we make those investments so that we can see that economic growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Your Minister of Finance's fall fiscal update clearly stated that, should revenues fall further, he would look at other tools to balance the budget. Later, when asked by reporters five separate times if he would increase taxes, he avoided answering the questions entirely.

A responsible government should have a plan to balance a budget by living within its means. Your government appears determined to go ahead and raise taxes on hard-working Ontario families one more time.

Premier, is your finance minister committed to balancing the budget without raising taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, our plan has been quite clearly laid out in the budget. We are implementing that. For five years in a row, Ontario has exceeded its deficit targets. It's one of the only governments in Canada to have achieved this level of success. By exceeding our targets, our accumulated deficit is \$25 billion lower than it would otherwise have been.

Let me talk about some of the other tools:

—cracking down on the underground economy, and that includes contraband tobacco;

—managing compensation costs, and we know that the President of the Treasury Board is actively engaged in that;

—making sure that businesses are paying their taxes, making sure that we're getting all of that revenue; and

—correcting the vertical imbalance with the federal government. It's very important that we work with the federal government to make sure that Ontario is getting its fair share.

1040

We are working to maximize the value of our assets—that's the work that Ed Clark and his commission have done—and we're doing a program review across government. Those are the tools that we're using.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Premier, we have seen this act by your government before: promising a plan to balance the budget when no such plan actually exists, shifting the blame for the incompetent handling of

Ontario's fiscal situation onto everyone but those responsible, and then capping the irresponsible behaviour off with a tax increase on hard-working Ontario families.

When your Minister of Finance was asked if he would commit to avoiding further tax increases, he dodged the question altogether. Premier, again I ask you: Will you commit to a plan to balance the books without raising a single tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, our plan has been laid out very clearly, and the member opposite has chosen to ignore the answer. I just went through six initiatives that we are taking. One of them does talk about the federal government and the relationship with the federal government, but there are five others that are tools we are using to work our way to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

I have answered the question in terms of the path that we have laid out. That is the path that we are on. Those are the initiatives that we are taking. That is the way we will get to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My second set of questions this morning is to the finance minister. Minister, on numerous occasions, you've been asked to clarify your plans to utilize what you have called "new revenue tools" in order to meet your campaign pledge to balance the budget within three years. Just this morning I asked the Premier three straightforward questions on the same subject, which she obviously refused to answer, so let's distill this down to something even more basic.

Minister, you recently refused to rule out raising taxes to fix your government's failing financial position. Can you answer this simple question: Will you commit that you will not raise the HST before the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Oh, Mr. Speaker, this is great. The man who wants to be the leader of the party is looking at trying to show vision before the public and the people of Ontario. He is now trying to make things up as he goes.

We put forward a budget. We put forward a fall economic update. We've laid out very clearly what it is that we need to achieve by building a path to balance that talks about the integrity of our revenue, ensuring fairness in our tax system, making certain the underground economy is addressed and looking at the leakage in our system. At the same time, we're looking at maximizing our assets to increase our dividends, we're continuing to do our savings, finding ways to improve our overall expenses—which, by the way, has made Ontario the lowest-cost government in Canada because of the measures that we've taken. We're going to continue doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Hard-working taxpayers of Ontario already pay their fair share of taxes. You owe it to them and everybody in the province to be crystal clear.

Minister, will you today rule out raising personal income taxes on Ontario workers between now and the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, the member who's asking the question—when he was the labour critic, his only plan was to fire 100,000 people. That is not what we're doing. We're trying to ensure that we support the system and invest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member talks about right-to-work legislation and forcing people into lower—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing, please. If it happens again, you'll be warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member opposite talks about right-to-work legislation, putting people in vulnerable positions in the lowest wages that are possible, we're trying to find ways not only to control expenses by making our path to balance effective, but we're also being fair by ensuring that we stimulate economic growth. That's why we're investing in people and their skills. That's why we're investing in modern infrastructure, creating over 100,000 jobs last year. And we are controlling—

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Minister, as you know, my background is in small business. Small businesses employ the majority of workers in this province. Indeed, small and medium-sized businesses are the cornerstone of our local communities. They are also the backbone of Ontario's economy.

Minister, will you today rule out raising taxes on small businesses between now and the next election?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, we have been supporting small business. In fact, it was that party that delayed the implementation of the elimination of the employee health tax for 90% of all businesses in Ontario. We have just passed the Better Business Climate Act that will reduce red tape. In fact, the CFIB has applauded the step that we're taking in the right direction to support small business.

As I was saying just a moment ago, we have maintained the lowest and most dynamic taxes in North America.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You haven't passed Bill 7 yet. You'd better get your notes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order, second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You'd better get new briefing notes.

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

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Because of our attractive, dynamic tax system we have now become the top destination for foreign direct investment. More start-ups are

happening in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada combined. We will continue to support businesses, we'll continue to do what's necessary to provide that integrity, and we'll continue to do so even though the members opposite have actually voted against those measures.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Affordable child care spaces in Ontario are closing and the response of the Liberal minister was, "I'm not really quite sure what the problem is." Health care is being cut and people are feeling it, and the response of the Liberal minister was, "We are not making cuts." People on social assistance have been left without support that they rely on and the response of the Liberal minister was that this is making "a mountain out of a very small molehill."

The Liberals are looking more and more arrogant and out of touch by the day. Will the Premier acknowledge that people are being hurt by her budget and her ministers' incompetence and insensitivity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Obviously, I reject the premise of the question. What I will say is that I acknowledge that there are people in Ontario who are struggling; there are people in Ontario who are looking for child care. I understand that. That's why it's very important to me that the legislation that moves through this House is going to make child care safer and has the potential to create 6,000 new child care spaces.

I know that there are people in this province who are looking for care for their loved ones. That's why we continue to increase the support for community care; we continue to increase the budget for community care so that people will get the health care that they need when they need it.

I know there were families who suffered because they didn't get their cheques as quickly as they should have. That's why the minister is working very hard to rectify that situation. That's what I will acknowledge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals actually don't seem to get it. Health care cuts are real, child care spaces have been closed in this province under their watch and the Liberal social assistance software rollout has been a Gong Show. These have had real impacts on the people of this province. Does the Premier get that people and families are suffering under her watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that there is a complexity in making sure that 13.5 million people have the services they need. I understand that there are thousands of children in this province who have access to full-day kindergarten because of the policies we put in place. Some 470,000 children have benefited from full-day kindergarten as of this year. What I know is that that has helped families. That has helped families in every riding across this province.

Are there still people who are looking for the right child care arrangement for their children? Absolutely.

We're going to continue to work, including with the legislation that was just passed that will create 6,000 new safe child care spaces.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's an old saying that you're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Health care services have been cut even though the Minister of Health denies it. Whether it's cuts to home care in Windsor, fewer nurses or reducing access to operating rooms by half in local community hospitals, these are cuts—full stop.

Is the Premier going to continue to stand in this House and deny that health care services are being cut in Ontario?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, I am, because that's not the reality. The reality is that we continue to invest more money in health care, we continue to invest more money in the reduction of wait times for people across the system and we continue to invest more money in community care.

Is it complex to run a health care system for 13.5 million people? It absolutely is, Mr. Speaker. Is it necessary that we make changes so that we can transform that system so that it will be the best that it can be for the long term? Absolutely. So we're going through a transformation, and if we were not to do that, then we would not be responsible.

It is easy for the leader of the third party to stand up and pick on a particular issue in a particular community. We have to rectify those, but our responsibility is also to deal with the whole system and make sure that it is functioning at the highest level.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: When Coronation Park Day Nursery in Sarnia shut its doors because of Liberal cuts, the minister said she didn't understand the problem. Well, I went there. The problem is simple: There are no children at Coronation Park Day Nursery anymore.

The minister doesn't seem to get what this means to families in Sarnia. Does the Premier understand, if her minister doesn't—does the Premier at least understand why cutting child care spaces is a problem for families in Sarnia?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics of that particular situation. I know that the Minister of Education will want to comment. But let me just say this: As we have introduced full-day kindergarten, there is no doubt, I say to the member opposite, that there is a transition that is happening in the child care system. We understand that. Four- and five-year-olds who would have been in child care are now in full-day kindergarten—I might add, saving those families thousands of dollars a year so that they can have those kids in full-day kindergarten.

What that means is, in the child care system there is a transition so that children who have been on the waiting list who will be younger—they are now finding their way into the child care system. That is a change. It is a transformation. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a very good thing that 470,000 children have had full-day kindergarten—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When a family relies on social assistance and the money never shows up, that's a major problem. But not only did the minister insist that the problem was "a very small molehill," she refused to even apologize. Why won't the Premier acknowledge that in addition to fixing this problem, Ontarians deserve an apology?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the minister did apologize to the families who were affected by this. I'm very sorry, and I say it to the families who were affected by this. But the reality is, the system that is being put in place is a better system than was there before. The system will allow more time for caseworkers to work with families, and that's a very good thing, because that relationship is extremely important.

The minister has been in touch with municipalities. She is working to make sure that wherever there was an impact on a family, that is being rectified.

I go once again to the responsibility of government, and that is to make the changes that are responsible and will improve service to people over the long term.

This is about a very large system, Mr. Speaker: 500,000 cheques a month that go out. We'd better make sure we have got a system that works for people in the long term.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what this is about is services that are being cut and people who are feeling it. That's what this is about. But an arrogant, out-of-touch Liberal government seems to believe that they just need to deny, deny, deny and somehow that's going to stop being true. Can the Premier tell us why her arrogant Liberal government is denying what everyone else can see as a plain fact?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that when a question is written down and the supplementaries are written down, you read the question and then the supplementaries. But the fact is, I have not denied that there are people who are struggling. I have not denied that there are impacts that come about because of the changes that we are making. What I do deny is that we are cutting services for the sake of cutting services. That is not the reality.

We are going through, whether it's in the implementation of a new technology for making sure that people on social assistance have more time with their caseworkers; whether it's the implementation of full-day kindergarten, which does have an impact on child care; or whether it's making sure that people have the health care that they need where they need it, when they need it:

Those are system changes. They are necessary for the long-term well-being of the 13.5 million people in Ontario. I don't deny that that change is necessary. What I'm saying is that we must make the changes, and that's what we're doing.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in estimates committee, your office testified that the new SAMS system—software built by a company called Cúram and now owned by IBM—is “a modern, commercial, off-the-shelf application.” When questioned about Cúram's serious software flaws experienced by legislators in Minnesota and Maryland, your assistant deputy minister, Martin Thumm, testified that it failed in those states because “they didn't do the testing they needed to do before they implemented....”

Minister, for you, there was no rush to implement. In fact, you had four years to test the system and get it right. You extended the rollout deadline twice because of glitches and you still didn't stop until you rolled it out. You just steamrolled through, Minister. You now wear this failure. You had all the time in the world. You wear it. What's your excuse, Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the question. I think we need to go back to understand why, in fact, we implemented SAMS in the first place. You will perhaps recall that we had a very outdated system. It was one that was brought in under the former PC government in 2002.

In 2009, the Auditor General put together a report on ODSP and Ontario Works and raised a number of issues with respect to the old system—SDMT. There were security and access control issues. There was a lack of user satisfaction on the part of the front-line workers, and there were long-standing system errors.

Our government recognized the system was outdated and no longer tenable. That is why we decided on this investment in a new system that will better support staff that deliver social assistance and, ultimately, will better serve the people who rely on our programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The old system at least made sure that those cheques arrived on time and our most needy didn't suffer, Minister.

Your government is averse to doing proper research. You failed to do it on MaRS, you failed to do it on Ornge, and you certainly failed to do it on eHealth. It's evident you also failed to do your research on this new computer system. You had four years and multiple warnings from Minnesota, Maryland, OPSEU, your front-line staff and our PC members in estimates committee. Yet here you are left with a \$20-million mess that is a combination of overpayments, missed and delayed payments. People are going without, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, though the party opposite may feel it's acceptable to allow the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens to go unaddressed, we in the PC Party do not. The Premier said sorry. If she's really sorry, Minister, what you will do—and we're asking you the same question I asked yesterday: Will you bring those people from the front line back to estimates so we can get to the bottom of this and those people who are the most needy don't suffer because of your carelessness again?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Let's just get one thing straight. Our government has as its number one concern help and assistance for those most vulnerable members in society, at the core of the values that our party stands for, and it's truly ironic to hear the member opposite who—under their government, there was a cut of some 22% of social assistance rates.

We remain committed to working closely with our front-line staff. We will implement SAMS and we will continue to provide support to our clients. Our focus in the near future relies on us all working together. This is caseworkers on the front-line and the support staff that is there to assist them, whether they be in municipal settings or in ODSP offices. We have confidence that SAMS will be a better solution for both the caseworkers and the people we serve.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. On Monday, the minister told this House that the government has a contract with IBM to “assist us” with “the transition of going live with SAMS.” Will the Premier release that contract today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Yes, indeed, the government, through proper channels, obviously, engaged a vendor of record to implement this particular system. It is something that we've been working on and with the vendor Cúram, now owned by IBM, for the last three and half years. Clearly, technical support is provided and is continuing to be provided through this particular transition. We're working closely with our partners in the field to ensure that they get the kind of support they need, pursuant to our agreement with them and through the provision of these services.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: According to the reports, the government has found 65 defects in the SAMS program, which have led to the massive problems with social assistance money reaching the most vulnerable Ontarians. Apparently we have a contract to deal with these problems.

When the state of Minnesota had problems, IBM sent at least 80 technical workers to fix the problems. Have any IBM workers been dispatched to solve these problems, and how much are we paying them to actually fix the defects in their own software?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We continue to work with a very active technical support team available to municipalities. In my conversations with the mayors of such cities as Hamilton, Sudbury, Ottawa and Windsor, I've made it very clear that this kind of support is available to them. We've actually set up some dedicated hotlines wherever a payment issue is identified so that these issues are prioritized.

I would like to mention, though, at this point that we still are finding it very difficult to validate some of the anecdotes that we're hearing and have been printed in the media. The issue that we found with the contract related to the overpayment issue, as we've stated, has been corrected by the technical team.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The Ontario forestry industry is a critical part of our economy; in fact, the forestry industry employs over 160,000 Ontarians in about 260 communities across this great province. Although most Ontarians believe the forestry industry is only in northern Ontario, it may surprise you that I have a mill in my own riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. However, the best part about this industry is the sustainability of the resources, with approximately 25.6 million hectares of forest certified as sustainable—more than twice the size of the state of Ohio.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are you doing to ensure that the government of Ontario has a growing forestry sector?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. It's my understanding that it is sweet Lou Rinaldi's birthday today, so I want to wish the member a happy birthday.

He is right when he suggests that the sector has gone through some very challenging times, not just here in Ontario but right across the country: Ontario, BC and Quebec, as the major forestry-producing jurisdictions in the country.

Our government stepped up to the plate. We've invested over \$1.3 billion in forestry since 2005, including about \$570 million for a roads program, a program that I would say was downloaded onto the backs of the forestry companies by the NDP when they had their turn in government, and also including \$130 million in stumpage relief and \$170 million in electricity relief. A \$22.5-million grant to Resolute Forest Products for their mill in Fort Frances is one of the investments that we made on the capital side.

When the industry faced challenges related to global competition, a rising Canadian dollar, a global recession and a decline in the US housing market, we invested, and we're now seeing them coming through and increasing their—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for his response and leadership on this important issue.

My constituents have been listening to the accusations from the third party over the past few weeks regarding a mill in Fort Frances, a mill that's very important to the town, like many mills in small towns across Ontario.

Though a private company owns the mill, I know how critical it is that this mill be heated through the winter to ensure that it remains a viable asset in case a buyer comes forward. Could the minister report to the House what he has done to ensure that this mill remains heated throughout the winter months?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I thank the member for the question. It is accurate that over the course of the last several weeks, our office and our ministry have spent a great deal of time trying to work forward on a plan and a program with the owner of the mill, a privately owned asset, to see that that asset could be preserved should a new potential buyer step forward to purchase the asset.

We did not come to a successful conclusion on a deal with Resolute, so there's no formal deal between our government and the owner of the mill. But we have publicly heard that the owner of the mill, Resolute Forest Products, has indicated that they will heat the asset in what they're calling "asset protection mode."

I had a long conversation with Mayor Avis of Fort Frances. I indicated very clearly to him the language that Resolute is using in terms of what they will do in the asset. We're hopeful that that means it will be maintained in a state that, in that asset protection mode, should a potential buyer come forward, would reflect an asset that somebody would still be interested in buying.

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, you've been mandated by the Premier to be the most open and transparent government in the country, yet 14 agencies under your watch have not tabled their annual reports in the House.

The Ontario Place Corp., which falls under your watch, has not tabled an annual report since 2010. Minister, why has it taken three years, and still no annual reports for Ontario Place have been tabled in this House?

Hon. Michael Coteau: We are committed to responsible fiscal management, and accountability and transparency in our government. That's why the annual reports and expenses for ministry agencies are available publicly. There's a process in place for these reports before they're made public: They must be submitted by the ministry, they must be approved by the minister, approved by cabinet and tabled within the Legislature.

My ministry has received the 2012-13 annual reports from all of its agencies. These reports are still in the approval process and will be available for the public once they're tabled in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: In the case of Ontario Place, the financial reports are now listed online in public accounts for 2011 and 2012, just to update you, but the ministry has sat on those reports for almost a year. In them, the Auditor General notes concerns of pending legal action relating to the closure of Ontario Place. In fact, last year, an additional \$4 million was spent on unforeseen closing costs, according to your former deputy minister.

Minister, what are you trying to hide, and when will the annual reports for 2011, 2012 and 2013 with respect to Ontario Place be tabled in this Legislature?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I have personally signed the 2011-12 annual report for Ontario Place, and I expect them to be tabled within the Legislature very shortly.

We're excited about Ontario Place. Ontario Place was built in the 1970s. It is a great facility that we've invested time and energy into. We plan to bring that public asset back to the public so they can access it the same way I was able to access it with my family when I was a young guy.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Two weeks ago we were told that Ontario had joined with Quebec to set seven conditions for approval of the Energy East pipeline. But last week, the Premier called Alberta Premier Jim Prentice and reassured him that Ontario had not set any conditions at all.

The seven "principles," as the Premier describes them, are more like suggestions. They are weaker and narrower than Quebec's seven conditions. In particular, Quebec has committed to a provincial environmental assessment of the energies project; Ontario so far has not.

Will the Premier follow the lead of Quebec and commit to a full provincial environmental assessment of the Energy East pipeline?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite has listened to what both Premier Couillard and I and, this morning, Premier Prentice, have said in the public realm. We've been very clear that the principles that we put in place are things that we believe need to be considered, need to be part of the discussion at the National Energy Board.

We recognize that the NEB has jurisdiction over this decision. The Minister of Energy, through the Ontario Energy Board, has put a process in place that will gather input that will form the body of the intervention with the National Energy Board.

But I have been working very hard with Premiers across this country to put in place a Canadian energy strategy. I believe that having a Canadian energy strategy that looks at how we can all do our part—whether it's on greenhouse gas emissions or whether it's on clean renewable energy, we all have a role to play. That's the work that I've been doing with Premiers across the country.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, as you sometimes say, I heard a no.

Unlike Quebec, Ontario refuses to conduct a provincial environmental assessment of Energy East. The Premier says the federal process is good enough, even after Stephen Harper gutted the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. But provinces like British Columbia and Quebec have refused to leave their fate in the hands of Stephen Harper. Their Premiers have said pipeline projects in their provinces will not proceed unless it is in their province's interests.

Will the Premier make the same commitment to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member would know that the National Energy Board has jurisdiction over this issue. The province of Ontario and all the other provinces can only go there as interveners and provide information. By the time we're ready to make the submissions, there will not be enough time to complete an environmental assessment. That's number one.

Number two: We were ahead of the game almost a year ago by asking the Ontario Energy Board to consult across the province of Ontario. There were technical inputs, there were sociological inputs, there were all kinds of inputs that we received in our consultation. The consultation is not yet completed. Since the application has just been filed recently, we are going to open up the consultations once again. So all the environmentalists, all the businesses and the gas companies that are opposed to TransCanada will have input into our consultation. It's thorough, it's complete, we're ahead of the game, and I don't know how Quebec is going to do it in time.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

As you're well aware, today is the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today, the world is promoting a deeper understanding of disability issues and mobilizing support to foster a more inclusive society.

Here in Ontario, I'm proud of our government for passing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, which helped to create a more inclusive Ontario, regardless of ability.

Ontario is recognized as a world leader in accessibility. We are the first in the world to move to a more modern regulatory regime that mandates accessibility. We're the first in the world that requires staff to be trained on accessibility. We are the first in Canada with legislation that clearly outlines the goals and timelines.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister responsible for the AODA please inform the House about the progress our government has made to make Ontario more accessible?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for joining myself and a number of our colleagues this morning here in the Legislature in getting together with Community Living and March of Dimes to celebrate the UN

International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a great time to thank accessibility champions across the province for the important work they've done and the great progress we've made.

Together, we've made Ontario not just accessible but one of the most accessible, if not the most accessible, leaders in the entire world. What a great competitive advantage. It's something to be very, very proud of, not just for us but for accessibility champions across the province.

The 2010 Martin Prosperity Institute outlined that having an inclusive Ontario would see a \$7.9-billion investment in gross domestic product. This isn't only good for our society, it's not only good for people with disabilities, this is something that's crucial to our competitiveness as an economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for giving us an update about the steps that the Ontario government is making to make Ontario accessible.

I know the Pan and Parapan Am Games are putting a strong focus on accessibility in our province next summer. The games will showcase Ontario's para-athletes to the world. We are hosting 2,400 para-athletes and team officials, and broadcasting for the first time ever Parapan sports on live TV. The games are helping to grow the para-sports world.

In conjunction with the games, the first-ever Canadian wheelchair basketball academy was created by Wheelchair Basketball Canada. Today, high-performance wheelchair basketball athletes are training at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. These athletes have already begun using the world's first full-time, year-round daily training centre.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain the various strategies our government is taking to make the Pan and Parapan Am Games more accessible?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan Am Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for her important question. We're committed to making sure that the Parapan Am and the Pan Am Games in 2015 are the most accessible games ever. In every planning stage of the games, we've thought about how to make this experience available to all people of all abilities.

All existing sporting venues are completely accessible and every new build was designed with accessibility in mind. If you go out to the Scarborough aquatics centre, you will see it is perhaps the most accessible facility in North America. When you go inside, you can see a custom-built accessible ergometer that gives athletes in wheelchairs the ability to alter their force and power while training. In the centre, there's a heat treatment recovery system that rehabilitates athletes called the HydroWorx 2000. It has an underwater treadmill, resistant jet technology and many other state-of-the-art features.

We are working to make sure these games are the most accessible ever. We are so proud, and that's why

23,000 Ontarians will be trained in accessibility training to accommodate everyone.

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I think he was on the list to leave early.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me check, please.

I'm still going to provide the member with an opportunity to redirect, if you can do that for me, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker—perhaps the Premier, then.

In Manitoba, beekeepers have recently experienced higher-than-normal bee mortality. To assist with this financial burden of these uncontrollable losses, Manitoba has an insurance program to help their bee colonies. Beekeepers are paid an indemnity if overwinter losses exceed the coverage deductible. Premium costs for this program are shared 40% by the insured beekeeper, 24% by the province of Manitoba and 36% by the government of Canada.

Premier, we in the PC caucus are asking—your government has had 11 years—why have you not implemented a Manitoba-type insurance model to help our Ontario beekeepers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have implemented an Ontario program. The reality is that we have put in place supports for beekeepers who had the winter losses that we saw last year. We are working with the industry to make sure that we have an appropriate and balanced approach going forward.

Part of that is to prevent bee deaths. That is what we're aiming at. I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change will want to comment on the specifics around those changes.

We know it's very important that we support the beekeepers who have had these winter losses. At the same time, we've put a precautionary approach in place that will allow us to prevent bee deaths going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Our beekeepers need a very practical approach. Government does run insurance programs. I've had bees on my farms for 38 years. I have seen the losses over the years—well before neonics, for that matter.

Manitoba has an insurance program that's up and running right now. Alberta has a similar program. Now we see that Saskatchewan has started a bee mortality insurance pilot project, run through the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corp., to cover the loss of honey bees over the winter. They have tough winters, as we know, just like we had last winter. The pilot will run for three years before being evaluated to decide if it will continue. It will bring Saskatchewan in line with the bee insurance programs that are already there in Manitoba and Alberta.

You haven't followed Manitoba's lead over the last 11 years. You didn't follow Alberta's lead. Will Ontario at least consider the pilot project Saskatchewan has in place to provide risk insurance, again, to help our beekeepers in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I have great respect for his work as a producer and as a beekeeper. I hope he'll take the time to have a coffee with me later to discuss this, because I think this is not a partisan issue.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You don't talk to me about the truth, my friend.

Mr. Speaker, we're working right now on a program very similar to the other provinces' as well, but we're focused on the priority of actually reducing bee losses, because we don't think that's good for the environment, for beekeepers or for crop producers. Bees are such a critical part on their own—the managed bee population—of our farm economy, and they're important.

I hope the member opposite will support measures that will reduce the need for the people of Ontario to actually have to pay out for losses. I assume that would be comfortable with my friends in the official opposition, of reducing the cost of—

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

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Since 2003, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee coroner has reported on deaths due to domestic violence in the province and, each year, makes recommendations to various levels of government.

In their report released this morning, ARC points out that while some progress has been made on those recommendations, much more needs to be done.

Shamefully, not all ministries and agencies contacted for this report bothered to respond to each of the recommendations. Worse, not all agencies and ministries have bothered to implement the recommendations made in the coroner's domestic violence reviews.

Speaker, 251 women have died as a result of domestic violence in the 10 years since the DVDRC started examining this issue. Just last week, members in this House wore purple scarves in recognition of violence against women, so I know that it's a priority for the legislators in this Legislature.

Premier, what will this government do to establish monitoring mechanisms and to implement these recommendations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for this very important question. We all, I think, want to thank the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee for the report, and we'll all be reviewing the recommendations very carefully.

At the end of the day, we all have the exact same goal, which is an Ontario free of domestic violence. Of course, my heart goes out to the family that was highlighted in the media just today, I think—a terrible domestic tragedy that affected an entire family.

As the minister responsible for women's issues, it is a priority for me, and all of us, that Ontario women and everyone feel safe in their homes, their workplaces and their communities.

While Ontario has some of the lowest rates of domestic violence across Canada, we absolutely know that there is more work to be done. That's why our government has increased funding for community services that help victims of domestic violence. That has been increased by 48% since 2003. There is more work to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Unfortunately, just today there was a report of a mother and her two children who were murdered in Toronto on the weekend, having struggled to find housing in order to flee a violent situation.

Access to emergency housing is one of the recommendations in the coroner's report. Access to emergency housing remains a problem in the province of Ontario. One of the recommendations is that shelters and second-stage housing continue to receive support and funding that keeps pace with inflation.

What this group wants is to return to the Legislature next year to give this government an A for implementing the recommendations in the coroner's domestic violence review.

Why won't this government do everything in its power to ensure that all ministries and agencies comply with the coroner's recommendations, to end violence against women and to implement these very important recommendations?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think we'll all agree that one domestic violent act is one too many; one death associated with domestic violence is too many. That's why we have to keep making the investments we've been making.

Last week, my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services announced an additional \$14.5 million over the next three years to support women's shelters, counselling agencies and transitional housing.

Our government started making these investments at a time when the former government, in fact, was cutting funding to women's shelters and support.

I am pleased that next week I'll be making an important funding announcement with the Neighbours, Friends and Families immigrants and refugees campaign that will help women and their families affected by domestic violence to access the supports that are culturally and linguistically relevant and accessible.

We remain very committed to an Ontario free of domestic violence and sexual assault and sexual violence,

because we firmly believe that every woman has the right to feel safe and secure—

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The members of my riding in Davenport have been asking me about the new Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council and its plan to provide better access, better quality and better value.

The minister announced an important expansion of our mental health strategy that would help us improve access to services, reduce wait times and close the gaps in our system. To help guide the implementation of this plan, our government announced a new Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. The council will provide advice on the strategy's investments, promote collaboration across sectors and report annually on the strategy's progress.

The council will be chaired by Susan Pigott, and the members of the council include people who have experienced a mental health and addiction challenge, as well as leaders from across different sectors that serve people with mental health or addictions.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask: What are the priorities of this council and what do they plan on achieving?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks to the member from Davenport for this very important question. The council that she's referring to—the members will provide the government with important advice as we move forward with our mental health and addictions strategy phase 2's top five priorities.

These priorities include promoting resiliency and well-being for all Ontarians by expanding proven programs in schools and in the workplace, as well as drawing on public health expertise on mental health promotion and addiction prevention.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to also, as a priority, ensure that early identification and intervention is available for those with mental illness and addictions.

We're going to, as a third priority, expand housing, employment supports and initiatives to reduce contact with the criminal justice system; and providing the right care at the right time and in the right place through initiatives such as better service coordination, addressing gaps in the system and improving transitions.

We're also going to be establishing a new funding model linked to population need, quality improvement and service integration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: We know that approximately one in five young people in Ontario—that's more than two million—are dealing with mental health issues like anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Approximately

70% of mental health and addictions problems begin in childhood and adolescence.

Nearly 30% of my constituents in Davenport are below the age of 25. The promotion of overall healthy well-being is absolutely crucial for these young people.

Many community organizations help young people increase self-esteem, such as the Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club and others which provide support through services such as counselling, like the Abrigo Centre and the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre. However, many are looking to our government to take an active leadership role in supporting these Ontarians struggling with mental illnesses.

The first phase of the mental health strategy was focused on children and youth. Minister, how will you continue your commitment to this segment of the population in the second phase?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I, too, want to thank the member from Davenport for raising this very important question. As she said, the first three years of our mental health strategy has been focused on children and youth, and that's because it was the right and the smart thing to do, Speaker.

Today, more than an additional 50,000 children and youth and their families are benefiting from these initiatives and programs. While we are proud of our accomplishments, we know there's more to do.

My ministry will continue to work with our partners and transform the child and youth mental health system through our Moving on Mental Health plan, and promote community mobilization as we move into year 2 of our Youth Suicide Prevention Plan.

Together, we will help young people with mental health illnesses enjoy the very bright future that I think we'll all agree they deserve.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in June 2013, the county of Renfrew published a business case for accelerating the expansion of Highway 17. In that report, it called on your ministry to identify the continued expansion from Scheel Drive to the town of Renfrew in the province's five-year capital works budget.

Furthermore, it called on the province to roll out a predictable and multi-year program to fund the planning and implementation of environmental assessment updates, property acquisition and budget allocations of the continued expansion.

The people of my riding understand that the expansion is not only essential for the local economy but also one of driver safety.

1130

Minister, it has been over a year and a half since the county released its report. Can you give us an update? Have you seen the report, and what are your comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that question. I also want to commend him for his advocacy with respect to this particular issue and also to say to the county of Renfrew, for putting the business case for the accelerated extension of this particular highway forward, that I want to make sure they understand that it is obviously some great work that has taken place. I know there have been conversations in the past with other Ministers of Transportation regarding this project.

Of course, as the member opposite would know, the ministry understands the importance of this expansion, and we are committed to continuing to make improvements to this particular highway. For example, in 2012, as the member would know, we did finish the first phase of expansion from regional road 29 to Division Street. Phase 2, from Division Street to Scheel Drive, is currently under construction, and it's expected that this work will be completed in 2016.

Beyond that, Speaker, in 2014-15, I think it's important to note that our government is committing nearly \$2 billion to expand and repair southern Ontario's highways and bridges.

I look forward to continuing to work with this member and his county on this important project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for that reply, Minister, but we're speaking to beyond Scheel Drive, and I will say that your predecessor did identify this as a priority project and I'm hoping that you will consider it the same.

For a decade now, I have received a steady stream of emails, letters and phone calls to my office from concerned residents and municipal leaders around the issue of Highway 17. This is a key infrastructure project in eastern Ontario. It's about local economic development. It's also an issue of public safety.

I will ask you again to accept the findings of the county's report for the accelerated extension of Highway 17 and give us a date when you'll be implementing them. We need to know what's going to happen beyond 2016 when the expansion to Scheel Drive is complete.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for his supplementary question. What I didn't get to say in the opening answer was that the environmental assessments for phases 3 and 4 have been updated. Property acquisitions and designation have been initiated. Timing of construction will depend on a number of factors, including detailed design, property acquisition and additional environmental approvals.

I understand why this is important for this member, for this county and for this part of Ontario. I referenced in my initial answer the nearly \$2 billion that we're investing in southern Ontario's highways. I have heard not only from this member, but a number of members on that side of the House—the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and others—about the importance of investing in crucial infrastructure. It's why we have the Moving Ontario Forward plan:

\$29 billion over 10 years for transit, transportation and other crucial forms of infrastructure.

It is encouraging to hear members on that side of the House understand the enlightenment of our plan. I look forward to their continued support in the years to come.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. It's not easy being a student in Ontario, from studying and working full- or part-time jobs to paying the highest tuition fees in the country, but nothing makes it harder than trying to do all that while going hungry. Today, post-secondary students are one of the fastest-growing groups of food bank users. There is not one college or university campus that doesn't have some kind of food relief program, and many local food banks are setting special hours for post-secondary students.

Does the Premier think it is acceptable that increasing numbers of students must rely on food banks in order to afford post-secondary education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't think it's acceptable in as rich a society as we live in that people would go hungry. It's why we are the first government in Ontario to have a poverty reduction strategy. It's why the focus of our post-secondary policies has been to increase accessibility, to make sure that there are grants in place, to make sure that we reduce tuition so that students would be able to access post-secondary.

So, no, I don't accept that young people should go hungry in this province, and we're working very hard to make sure that young people and families have everything they need in order to be able to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This year's Hunger Report, released yesterday by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, points out that hunger is rampant on post-secondary campuses because university tuition has increased nearly 40% in just seven years. Students' budgets can't keep up with the rising prices of rent, tuition and food. This government could change that. The Liberals' sky-high tuition policies are forcing more and more students to choose between going hungry while they are studying or abandoning higher education altogether.

Why is this government making hunger another cost of higher education in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government understands the challenges that students face across this province—a number of different challenges. The member raises some good points, but she's wrong on a number of different categories as well.

We brought in a 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant that's providing thousands of dollars of savings across this province to students. Mr. Speaker, a student today who is receiving the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant is paying the same amount of tuition today that they would have been paying 10 years ago. That's a fact.

That doesn't mean we're done. That doesn't mean we're not going to keep working with students in post-secondary institutions to do everything we can to improve education in our universities and colleges and to ensure that we keep a cap on tuitions.

We've lowered the amount that post-secondary institutions can raise tuitions. We're working with students. We'll continue to address the challenge.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Énergie, the Honourable Bob Chiarelli.

Speaker, as an MPP and MD, I was pleased to learn of the recent Health Canada study on the effects of wind turbines, which found no evidence—I repeat, no evidence—to support a link between wind turbine noise and self-reported illnesses, stress or impacts on sleep. This scientifically grounded study, which included participants from communities across southwestern Ontario and PEI, is considered to be an international-class study, the most comprehensive investigation to date. Health Canada's study supported Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health's conclusion that there is no direct causal link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

Minister, with the results of these studies now confirming that there are no adverse health effects from wind turbine noise, will our government be relaxing its rules with regard to the siting of wind energy projects?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Etobicoke North for the question.

Our government's priority continues to be ensuring that renewable energy projects are developed in a way that respects communities and is protective of human health and the environment.

We appreciate Health Canada's work on building the science around wind projects. It found no link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

Local decision-making and health continue to be our top priorities, going forward.

Mr. Speaker, siting continues to be as important as ever. Our government has set standards for renewable energy projects, including noise limits to protect Ontarians, and we continue to have the toughest setback standards in North America, at a minimum distance of 550 metres.

Our government is committed to continuing to improve the siting of energy infrastructure in Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take your seats.

On December 2, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 12. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Amott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Garfield	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEBI JOHNSON

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today to congratulate Debi Johnson from my riding, who is the recipient of the first Ontario Dairy Producers lifetime achievement award. This award is presented to an individual who has shown significant leadership that has helped to advance the

Ontario dairy industry, who has provided service or been engaged in the dairy business in Ontario and who has made a significant contribution to the dairy industry as a whole.

Debi Johnson has more than fulfilled these criteria. She has served as treasurer and secretary for the York Region Milk Committee for over 25 years. In this role, she has organized the dairy educator program and organized talks for students. This year alone, she has coordinated over 1,000 different school talks for students in York region.

Debi has also worked with the Holstein club and is frequently involved in other community work as well.

Congratulations, Debi. You're an asset to the dairy community and the wider York region community as well.

RON CHERNEY

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is with great sadness that I rise today to discuss the loss of one of Niagara's most beloved of residents, Ron Cherney.

Ron's name is not unknown to most people from Niagara, especially those from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Ron was a family man who deeply loved his wife and children. He was a dedicated man who believed that if you lived in your community then you should belong to the community and give back to the community. He was proud of where he came from and certainly his community was proud of him. Anyone who bought from his family floral and gift business, used his consultant services or attended the Virgil Stampede will know that Ron Cherney certainly gave back to his community.

Ron was a major part of the Virgil business community, making his mark on a number of lasting projects in the area. Whether it was the Virgil arena, the splash pad or the park, Ron's involvement has had a lasting impact on his community.

I'd also like to add that he was a very active member of the Queenston Lewiston Rotary Club.

There weren't many fundraisers you could go to in Niagara-on-the-Lake without seeing Ron, whether he was organizing all the entertainment for the event or the fact that he was the public announcer for the weekend. The stampede and all those who went there will certainly miss Ron.

To highlight what kind of man Ron was, on the morning of his passing, just after the first big snowstorm of the year, Ron, at the age of 69, was out shovelling his neighbours' cars out of the snow. He was an incredible man who made his community better.

CHRISTMAS CARAVAN

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm proud to rise in the House today to talk about a very special event in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. Every year the Markland Wood Homeowners Association hosts an event called the Christmas Caravan. Families and members of the com-

munity of all ages volunteer their time to join the caravan to visit every home in Markland Wood to collect non-perishable food items and clothing for charities across Toronto serving our communities. The caravan includes a police vehicle, a fire truck, a transport truck and, of course, Santa Claus, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, the caravan raised eight tonnes of food, \$750 in cash, and a tremendous amount of clothing and toys for children and charities in need. Some of the charities that benefit are the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Scott Mission and the Brothers of the Good Shepherd.

This year, I will be attending the Christmas Caravan on December 14 and encourage everyone in the community, particularly Markland Wood, to participate and support this worthy cause.

I've had the opportunity to attend this event in the past, and I must say it's amazing to see the community come together in such large numbers in the spirit of the holidays to support those in need. I think events like this one highlight the importance of community organizations such as the Markland Wood Homeowners Association, which for years has advocated for that community and, as the caravan illustrates, has served those not only in their community but in our province who are in need.

I would like to thank the Markland Wood community for their generosity. I would like to thank the Markland Wood Homeowners Association for hosting such a great event, and I'd like to congratulate them on all their past success and urge them to continue the great work that they do on behalf of the constituents of Etobicoke Centre.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Christmastime brings many different memories for those of us who celebrate Christmas. It's a very reflective time of year: for some, sad memories, but for others, happy memories, perhaps of times when they were younger with family or friends, or even now, as they think about the smiles on their children's faces, the excitement of the festive season, the colourful bright lights, setting up and decorating the Christmas tree and even going door to door Christmas carolling.

For me, I think about just how grateful I am for family and others in my life. As a politician, there are many Santa Claus parades or, as I call them, Christmas parades. In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I have Christmas parades not only in Chatham, but in Tilbury, Leamington, Blenheim, Ridgetown and Wheatley.

Along the various parade routes, I can be heard shouting out "Merry Christmas" to both young and old, and that generally generates a "Merry Christmas" back to me. I also have fun with the children as I look at them, with their excited faces. I'll ask them, "How many sleeps until Christmas?" and, much to my surprise, they know how many sleeps until Christmas.

One of the traditions at our home is that we also invite a less fortunate family to share Christmas with us, and, together, we enjoy a delicious turkey dinner with all the

trimmings, and then we sing carols and even play some table games.

So, friends, why not make this time of year a special time of year? Reach out to someone or some family less fortunate and make it a great Christmas for them. After all, I was always taught that it was better to give than to receive.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

BORIS NATYSHAK

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm going to dispense with tradition—and possibly convention—in using my member's statement not to acknowledge the great things that I know happen in my riding but to say hi to my dad, who has come to Toronto, who has been admitted to St. Mike's Hospital to receive a heart valve procedure. So he's there right now; I'm here. I'll be joining my mom and my dad very soon, as soon as my House duty is done.

I want to tell my dad that I love him, and I thank him for everything he has ever done, to be strong and to not be ornery like he typically is and to treat my mom, you know, the way that she deserves to be treated—as an angel. And don't be so mean, but be strong and know that you're in the right place and that our health care system that you fought for your entire life is here to provide for you, to make sure that you're going to get well.

It's kind of tough to get through this one, but I could think of no better way to say hi to my dad—I know you're watching, because I just called mom to tell you to tune in—and to thank my mom for everything she's doing in supporting him through this. My dad has fought to bring awareness about diabetes and to bring us to a position where we can cure that disease finally in this country and on this planet. He has struggled with that and has been the epitome of health and fitness in the way to live a healthy life. He's going through his own challenges that I'm sure he's tough enough to do.

I want to thank my sister Suzie for being the strong member of our family, to bring Boris and Sheila up to Toronto to go through this. And to all those at St. Mike's Hospital who now have to deal with my dad, Boris, I certainly understand what you're going to go through, and thank you for the care that you're going to give to my dad during this procedure. I'm very, very thankful for the professionalism and the love that you're going to give to my dad over his treatment through his heart valve surgery. Thank you.

1510

CUMBERLAND VILLAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Members' statements.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans, try and top that.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes, I'm going to try to.

Monsieur le Président, last Saturday, the Cumberland Community Association, in support of the Orléans-

Cumberland Community Resource Centre, welcomed me and many residents to an incredible day in the Cumberland village to celebrate the spirit of the holiday season with a step back in time.

It was a festive afternoon steeped in historical nostalgia. It all started with a wagon ride through the streets of the town pulled by two beautiful Canadian-bred horses.

I would like to thank Messieurs Gerry Lalonde and James Levesque, as well as Mrs. Elita Krause, for their company and this amazing opportunity.

It is with heartfelt thanks that I acknowledge the seven residents who graciously opened their home to the visitors and to those who showed up to tour the village to experience a moment in discovering the well-kept treasures of a few of the founding families of Cumberland. When visiting these homes that belonged to families like the Kennedys, the Fergusons and the Wilsons—whose home belonged to the first female Liberal Senator under the Mackenzie King government in 1930, Mrs. Cairine Wilson—I could honestly feel the echo of the past through the town. It was a magical moment and a special lesson of history.

I wish them a very, very good season of the holiday, and thank you for the invitation.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, today is the day when we observe International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today is the day when we recognize over one billion people: 15% of the world's population live with a disability.

Today I'm proud to stand and tell you about the work being done in the constituency of Carleton–Mississippi Mills. A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of touring Ottawa–Carleton Lifeskills, an agency that has been caring for people with disabilities for 30 years. Ottawa–Carleton Lifeskills offers residential and day programs, as well as independent living and home-share programs, to those living with autism, Down's syndrome and various other disabilities.

I was thrilled to meet the staff and participants alike and was amazed at the work being done. I heard from the staff that it is time that we bring those living with disabilities out from the shadows and into the sunshine, and today I would like to acknowledge all of those Ontarians who are living with a disability.

ABDIRIZAK WARSAME AND PAUL HOWARD

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to say that on this side of the House our thoughts and prayers are with the member from Essex's father and family, and it's hard to follow.

But it's my pleasure today to stand and recognize two volunteers from my riding of Ottawa South. Abdirizak Warsame recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Crime Prevention Ottawa. Since he arrived in Ottawa in 1989, Abdirizak has dedicated himself to helping, educating and inspiring youth and newcomers in our community. As a multicultural officer in our schools, he supported students and their families to integrate into their new environment. More recently, through OCISO, he provides spiritual and emotional support to adults in custody at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. In short, his work in the community is remarkable.

Paul Howard is also a member of my community, and he's the long-time coach of the South Ottawa Mustangs. He coaches the tyke team right now. Paul learned on Monday that he won the NFL Youth Coach of the Year award, which is a pretty big thing. It also comes with some support for the team that's really great.

Interjection: It's a big deal.

Mr. John Fraser: It is. As I said, he is coaching tykes. He focuses on an area of my riding, Herongate. It's an area that has some challenges. Paul does a lot to lift up youth and give them a good start in life.

I just want to say congratulations to both men and thank them very much for what they do for our community.

KINGSTON INTERVAL HOUSE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise to tell you about another shining example of outstanding dedication in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, bearing in mind that only a few days ago we all donned purple scarves in support of ending violence against women in Ontario.

Kingston Interval House has been providing a safe and supportive space for women and children in crisis for nearly 40 years. Their continued advocacy and counselling have helped to empower a generation of vulnerable women and helped to educate our community to a greater awareness of the unfortunate facts about abuse and violence against women and children.

Just a week or so ago, I was absolutely thrilled to learn that they had been awarded just over \$100,000 by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The money will enable the appointment of a supportive housing coordinator for their Robin's Hope transitional housing project. Initiatives like this provide safety and resources at a time when major life decisions are being made; a real lifeline, in other words. I'm proud that the foundation grant will enable Interval House to continue to operate effectively.

Congratulations and thank you again to executive director Pam Havery, the board, the staff and the volunteers for your valuable work in our community.

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

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the use of sign-language interpreters in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent for the request put forward. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that during statements by the ministry and responses today, on Wednesday, December 3, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that during statements by the ministry and responses today, on Wednesday, December 3, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: A little bit late, but I wanted to introduce Adam Yahn. He is the government relations manager for the Ontario Real Estate Association and a proud member of the Ontario Legiskaters. We'd like to welcome him back to Queen's Park. He's a familiar face around here for many of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's commonly known as a ringer.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So I appreciate that. Thanks for your—

Interjection: Except that he can skate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's what I meant.

I do have an introduction, so if all members would join me in welcoming, in the Speaker's gallery today, a parliamentary delegation including staff from the Parliament of Malaysia led by His Excellency Speaker Pandikar. We welcome our guests from Malaysia. They wanted to see question period and I said no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization /

Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'augmenter la pénalité prévue à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.

1520

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Protecting Passenger Safety Act amends the Highway Traffic Act. The bill gives municipalities stronger tools to protect public safety by increasing fines, adding demerit points, and licence and vehicle impoundment for operating an illegal taxi or, as they're also known, a bandit cab. It's a serious issue in my community, and I'm glad to be able to have presented this bill.

RIGHT TO CARE ACT
(CHILDREN 16 YEARS OF AGE
AND OLDER), 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DROIT
AUX SOINS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES ENFANTS DE 16 ANS ET PLUS

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act. Section 1 of the act is amended to include a new purpose of the act which will recognize that services provided under the act should be provided in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At present, section 29 of the act prohibits a temporary care agreement from being made in respect to a child who is 16 years of age or older. Section 29 is amended to allow temporary care agreements to be made in respect to children who are 16 years of age or older.

OTTAWA SCHOOL
DAY NURSERY INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive Ottawa School Day Nursery Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

MICHAËLLE JEAN

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Last Sunday, the International Organisation of La Francophonie appointed, by consensus, the first woman and the first Canadian to the position of secretary-general of the organization. This first woman is our former Governor General, the current chancellor of the University of Ottawa and a great Canadian, Michaëlle Jean. She's also a constituent in Ottawa-Vanier.

Lorsque M^{me} Jean a annoncé sa candidature au poste de secrétaire générale de l'OIF, je lui ai tout de suite accordé mon appui officiel au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Je prends cette occasion pour exprimer à quel point je suis fière de la voir accéder à cette prestigieuse fonction au sein de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

All of Canada welcomes this nomination with pride and hope. Michaëlle Jean has already proclaimed that she will direct her actions within the International Organisation of La Francophonie to helping women, children and youth in francophone and francophile countries so they can reach their full potential.

Michaëlle Jean will certainly inspire a movement of greater solidarity with women and children and between peoples of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Les francophones au Canada connaissent bien M^{me} Jean. Plusieurs l'ont connue comme journaliste et animatrice de grand renom pour Radio-Canada pendant plus de 10 ans. De plus, qui peut ignorer son travail remarquable auprès de femmes victimes de violence conjugale et de la violence envers les enfants? Tout à l'honneur de ses aptitudes rassembleuses, elle est, depuis le 1^{er} octobre 2010, l'envoyée spéciale de l'UNESCO pour la reconstruction d'Haïti, où elle travaille pour répondre aux espoirs et aux besoins du pays.

M^{me} Jean est à l'image d'une francophonie canadienne moderne et exemplaire, tournée vers le monde, généreuse de son temps, et qui se donne sans compter.

Un beau proverbe haïtien dit : « Quand il pleut de la solidarité, c'est de l'amitié qui pousse. » L'Ontario, terre d'accueil de milliers de francophones, est déjà une grande amie des pays membres de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Nous sommes solidaires, accueillants et heureux de la belle diversité culturelle que notre collaboration au sein de la Francophonie favorise.

Je profite de l'occasion pour rappeler que l'Ontario participe activement à la Francophonie internationale depuis plus d'une décennie en assistant, notamment, aux sommets de la Francophonie. La mise en oeuvre de la commémoration du 400^e anniversaire de la présence

française en Ontario bat son plein. L'élection de Michaëlle Jean arrive donc à point nommé pour mettre en évidence, encore une fois, la vitalité de la Francophonie en Ontario, au Canada et dans le monde.

Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, je vous invite donc à joindre votre voix à la mienne pour féliciter chaleureusement M^{me} Michaëlle Jean, qui va maintenant être le visage et la voix de la Francophonie dans le monde entier. Et quoi de mieux que d'avoir une Franco-Ontarienne d'adoption qui va maintenant incarner cette vitalité francophone? Merci, et bonne fin de journée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, madame la Ministre.

Statements by ministries.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to rise today in the House to recognize the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Today, we have an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments we've made together in making Ontario more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that Ontario is a leader in accessibility. In 2005, our government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This landmark legislation, which received unanimous support from all parties in this Legislature, made Ontario the first jurisdiction to mandate accessibility. Together, we've made great strides towards this goal over the past nine years. This has been accomplished by working with our partners in the private, public and non-profit sectors.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is privileged to have a new special adviser on accessibility. A few weeks ago, our government appointed former Lieutenant Governor David Onley to this role. Working together, with David Onley's leadership, our government will continue to break down barriers for people with disabilities, promote the economic benefit of inclusion and champion accessibility across the province.

David Onley is right when he says that moving a person dependent on government benefits to the role of a taxpayer just makes good business and economic sense. The fact is, according to the Martin Prosperity Institute, making Ontario an accessible province will add \$7.9 billion to our GDP.

Last year, Ontario appointed Mayo Moran, provost of Trinity College at the University of Toronto, to lead an in-depth review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Provost Moran has just completed her review, and I now have her report. I'd like to thank Provost Moran for her hard work. I look forward to reviewing her recommendations and tabling them in this Legislature at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I've recently received recommendations following the first review of our province's accessibility standard on customer service. I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council/Standards

Development Committee, led by Chair Jim Sanders, for their thorough review. I know my honourable colleagues will all want to join me in welcoming members of the council and committee to the Legislature today: Michelle Saunders, Dean Walker, John Hendry and Gary Rygus, who are in the House—I think three out of the four at least are in the House today. Thank you so much for your service to this province and for being champions of accessibility.

1530

Today and every day, we must recognize that while we've come a long way, there's still a lot of work ahead of us. Removing barriers and building an accessible Ontario is a goal we all share. We don't want anything to stand in the way of Ontarians participating in their communities or their workplaces. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we've been working to make sure the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors know about Ontario's accessibility law.

This fall, we launched a marketing campaign to educate businesses on what they need to do to comply with the law. We have tools and resources available at no cost to help them meet their requirements. That being said, I truly believe there's more work to do to make Ontarians and businesses aware of the business case of becoming more accessible, as well as the obligations of businesses and organizations under the act.

Next year we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's a chance for us to celebrate just how far we've come. It's also an opportunity to reflect on our vision for the next 10 years as we work towards our goal of an accessible province by 2025. By that, I mean the 10th anniversary is an ideal time to identify not only where we're succeeding, but also where we're falling short. We have ambitious goals. Now is an opportunity to recalibrate and create even more momentum towards making Ontario more accessible.

This coming year will be marked by celebrations in communities across Ontario. I encourage all Ontarians to find a way to acknowledge this momentous occasion.

Next year, Ontario will host the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games. The games will give us a chance to show people around the world Ontario's leadership in accessibility. I'm proud to say that over 20,000 volunteers are being trained to provide an accessible games experience.

You know, we really ought to be excited about the opportunities that lie ahead of us to build a more inclusive society and maintain our position as a global leader in accessibility. The fact is that one in seven people currently has a disability. This number is expected to rise to one in five over the next 20 years as our population ages. Our generation has the capability to ensure that all Ontarians will have an opportunity to participate fully in everyday life. At the same time, our efforts will make Ontario more competitive, boost productivity and strengthen our economy.

Together, let us seize this opportunity. Together, let us make Ontario more accessible, more competitive, and more prosperous for us all.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to join my colleagues in marking the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day is an opportunity to promote awareness, build understanding, and mobilize support for the inclusion of all persons with disabilities. It is an opportunity for all of us to recognize on a global scale the benefits of a future where persons with disabilities are included in every aspect of society and how we can make our communities better places to live for everyone.

The United Nations estimates that people with disabilities make up nearly 15% of the world's population. That's more than one billion people. Many live in poverty, face discrimination, and have limited opportunities for growth.

In Ontario, it is estimated that one in seven people has some type of disability. This includes 62,000 adults and 28,000 children living with a developmental disability. If our province is to realize its full potential, we must be sure that all Ontarians can reach their potential.

Realising our collective potential starts with inclusion. That is what has inspired our developmental services investment plan. We are investing \$810 million over three years, the largest-ever funding increase to the developmental services system in Ontario.

It will provide direct funding to thousands of people so they can participate more fully in the community, offering more choice and flexibility of supports than ever before.

It will promote inclusive work environments and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to find competitive employment, develop successful job skills and contribute to the growth of the province.

The plan will also provide residential supports for an additional 1,400 people with urgent needs.

In addition, we are investing up to \$15 million over the next three years in an employment and modernization fund which will offer financial support to projects for individuals with developmental disabilities through employment, and for projects that increase the efficiency, collaboration and innovation in our service delivery network.

Through the work of our housing task force, this investment will broaden the range of inclusive housing options for people with developmental disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building Ontario up by investing in people and providing the most vulnerable in our society with the supports they need to succeed. This will be achieved through our continued investments and through the long-term transformation of the social assistance system.

Since 2003, our government has increased rates for people with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program benefits by 17.2%. Last year, we changed the rules for income earnings while receiving social assistance. Now everyone who works can earn more

without having their assistance benefits reduced. Next spring, we will create a new flexible employment benefit to better support the employment goals of social assistance clients.

Today, we posted the 2014 report on the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities on my ministry's website. This agreement reflects our shared commitment to support employment programs for Ontarians with disabilities, including social assistance clients and post-secondary students with disabilities. As well, it gives Ontario the ability to continue successful programs that are helping remove barriers for people with disabilities so they can seek training, find jobs and build careers. For clients with disabilities, this approach is allowing us to invest more in everyone who wants to work, no matter what stage they're at in their employment journey.

Mr. Speaker, it is motivating to see the roots of inclusion already planted in this province. They're evident at the Scugog library in Port Perry, where Community Living Durham North teaches people successful workplace skills so they can move forward to gain employment in community. In my own riding of Oak Ridges-Markham, Community Living York South is working with local businesses to hire people with developmental disabilities and to promote the participation of young people with developmental disabilities in the workforce. In Ottawa, LiveWorkPlay is working with local car dealerships who are hiring young adults with developmental disabilities because of their skills and abilities.

Partnerships between government, families and communities are crucial to building a truly inclusive, supportive society, and these are a few examples of the inspiring work that is being done. I want to thank our community partners for the amazing work they do to empower people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their communities.

This idea of a truly inclusive and supportive society is embedded in our multi-year transformation plan for developmental services and our long-term transformation agenda for the social assistance system.

Ontario has come a long way in promoting inclusion, integration and true citizenship for people with disabilities, but there is much more to be done. As Minister of Community and Social Services, I am looking forward to advancing our government's priorities and ensuring Ontarians with disabilities are best supported. My mandate is to drive forward the transformation of supports for those living with disabilities. Our government is committed to reforming the delivery of services and supports available to those through Developmental Services Ontario and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

I call upon every member of this House and every community in this province to join us in building an Ontario which embraces diversity in all its forms and values the contributions of all our citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand we have a rotation agreement. Responses.

MICHAËLLE JEAN

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure and an honour to rise to congratulate Madam Michaëlle Jean in her post as the secretary general of l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, appointed by consensus.

1540

J'aimerais ajouter ma voix à celles de mes collègues et à celles de ma leader, Andrea Horwath, et de notre porte-parole dans les affaires francophones, notre membre de Nickel Belt, M^{me} France Gélinas, et féliciter M^{me} Michaëlle Jean de ses nouvelles fonctions comme secrétaire générale de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, OIF, également connue simplement comme la Francophonie. Elle succède aux deux premiers présidents : Boutros Boutros-Ghali et Abdou Diouf, l'ancien président du Sénégal.

Elle est déjà bien connue comme la gouverneure générale du Canada de 2005 à 2010 et aussi la chancelière de l'Université d'Ottawa, et pour son engagement exceptionnel envers les jeunes et les femmes.

L'OIF sert à défendre la langue et la culture francophone, ainsi que les valeurs de la Francophonie, telles que la paix, la démocratie et les droits humains.

Ici, en Ontario, plusieurs députés comme moi, francophone et francophile, sont membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, l'APF. Nous aurons la chance de travailler avec M^{me} Jean dans le cadre des travaux de l'APF.

Je suis certain que M^{me} Jean assumera ses responsabilités avec distinction et je lui souhaite beaucoup de succès de la part de notre parti.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is a privilege to rise on behalf of New Democrats to recognize the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day has helped to promote understanding and awareness of disability issues and the importance of ensuring that the rights of all persons with disabilities are respected.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, we also wish to thank David Lepofsky and the AODA Alliance for all of their hard work on disability issues over these many years.

I also want to applaud the strong, dedicated advocates for disability rights in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh, people such as Dean LaBute and others right across this province who work each day to protect and expand disability rights.

Speaker, I'm sure, like you, we have many friends and acquaintances who are disabled. I have many friends, some who were born disabled and some who became disabled after unfortunate car accidents or a slip and fall.

One man I know sat back after a good meal. He pushed his chair back from the table. The chair was one of the old kind with four wheels, four legs. The chair fell over and he fell out and broke his back. He broke vertebrae and was left a paraplegic.

Another friend, Greg, was a high school teacher. He had a nice Corvette; unfortunately, he had a terrible car accident and was damaged for life.

Donny, another really good friend, on the night he graduated from high school dove into a swimming pool and ended up as a paraplegic.

My wife used to manage a group home for the disabled in Forest Glade in Windsor. It was an innovative initiative, a home with staff, apartments and 24-hour care. Actually, now the government is doing away with the home, closing it down and moving the clients into high-rise apartments. The staff will make individual visits. They'll have to go to the high-rises to feed, bathe and tend to the needs of those who used to be just down the hall. I'm told some people think this is progress; I don't. I don't see how they're going to save money.

We used to spend a lot of time at the ALPHA Apartments. Actually, at this time of the year, believe it or not, I'd dress up as Santa Claus and have a lot of fun. We'd have summer barbecues. The staff were absolutely fabulous. We sponsored a T-ball team, and I coached it. The first time we played, we actually won the championship in our first season.

My friends who lived in the ALPHA Apartments used to call us, those of us without a disability, TABs. That's right, TABs, temporarily able-bodied, because we're only one slip and fall away, one terrible car accident, one mistake in going swimming or diving into a pool.

The United Nations does a good job. This is the one day of the year that they bring this to our attention. We bring it to the public's attention. Thank you to the United Nations for proclaiming this day the day to recognize those with disabilities and to honour disability rights.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I consider this a real honour to have the chance to speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus in recognition of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I want to thank the Ministers of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and Community and Social Services for their gracious remarks this afternoon as well.

All of us know someone who has a disability. We know them as everyday heroes for the way they approach life and overcome every challenge that comes their way. Each year on December 3, we reflect on the issues that affect people with disabilities around the world. This day is meant to raise awareness of the outstanding contribution that people with disabilities make and have the potential to make if we support them to overcome the challenges they face and to mobilize support for their dignity, rights and well-being. According to the United Nations, there are over one billion people around the world with some form of disability.

This year's theme is "Sustainable Development: the Promise of Technology." It will focus on how we can use the power of technology to promote inclusion and

accessibility. Advances in modern technology have the potential to help people with disabilities integrate more fully and provide them with the tools they need to help them become full participants in our society, including in the economy. Technology also allows people with disabilities to become strong and meaningful contributors in every way. We must all strive to work together to encourage the creation of workplaces that are open and accessible to allow everyone the opportunity to fully participate in our workforce.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize our colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa for the great work that she has done and the leadership she has shown in advocating for people with disabilities here in this House. It's because of her hard work and persistence that this Legislature established the Select Committee on Developmental Services. The committee presented its final report this past summer, making 46 recommendations.

The committee recommended that services for people with disabilities be brought together under one ministry to streamline the process and provide easier access to services. It also recommended ending waiting lists for services and supports within the next 12 months and ensuring that children who receive funding for personal support workers, respite and community programs are able to transition seamlessly into adult programs when they turn 18. These are all common-sense suggestions that I think we all can support. Indeed, we have a duty to do everything we can to help support people living with disabilities in this province, and I urge the government to implement these recommendations as soon as possible.

Let us not think of people with disabilities in terms of what they're unable to do. Let us instead see them for what they can do.

MICHAËLLE JEAN

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux parler pour le caucus conservateur aujourd'hui et j'offre mes félicitations à la nouvelle secrétaire générale pour l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Michaëlle Jean.

Aujourd'hui on a eu une petite réunion avec François Boileau, de la commission de la langue française, ici. On a mangé un peu. On a parlé avec François au sujet des services francophones, des services en français pour tout le monde ici en Ontario.

On souhaite qu'on puisse avoir plusieurs immigrants qui parlent français, pas seulement du Québec et pas seulement du reste du Canada, mais du monde. On a plusieurs pays au monde où on a des gens qui veulent travailler ici en Ontario, et on devrait même offrir des services en français pour tout le monde—des services gouvernementaux, mais aussi des services pour la santé et des services pour le système de justice.

Alors, je vais voyager avec d'autres membres à la Conférence des femmes de la Francophonie ce février en Italie. Ce sera très intéressant. J'espère que Michaëlle Jean peut nous joindre.

Encore, je veux offrir mes félicitations à la nouvelle secrétaire générale—la première femme et une Canadienne.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

I thank all members for their comments and their responses.

1550

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on wind development projects awaiting approval until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I affix my name to this petition, fully support it and will give it to page Ethan to take to the table.

LEGAL AID

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human and social services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of new and existing funding in the Ontario budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Steven to take to the Clerk.

HOSPICE FUNDING

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

“Whereas there is a discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

“Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

“Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

“Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

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

“That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care.”

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll be reading a petition on the Ring of Fire.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines granted Noront Resources an exploration permit on April 19, 2013; and

“Whereas this permit is for a duration of three years with possibility of a three-year renewal; and

“Whereas the public consultation period (EBR registry #011-8444) was held between February 26, 2013, and March 28, 2013, with no comments received; and

“Whereas the shareholders of this company expect the law to be upheld for Noront Resources and for this company to be allowed to explore as per the permit received;

“We, the undersigned,”—there are several hundred signatures here—“petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to release the exploration permit and road permit for Noront Resources before the shareholder price is further damaged.”

I agree with this. I sign my name to this and give this to page Haniah.

CEMETERIES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I have a petition to present:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cemeteries do not allow for the burial of a dog's body with their human owner's body in the same cemetery, we the petitioners (dedicated animal rights advocates and animal lovers) ask that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize our love for our pets and allow for the burial of pets with people in the same cemetery without having to resort to cremation;

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

“We ask that we the people be given the right to be buried with our animal pets in the same burial plot or within adjacent burial plots in the same cemetery without having to resort to cremation.”

I sign the petition and pass it to Claudia for presentation.

WANSTEAD TRANSMISSION STATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. By way of prelude, I'd like to thank Owen Byers, the former warden of Lambton county, who collected this.

“Whereas the Wanstead Transmission Station, the critical link in delivering power to the majority of residents in the communities of Oil Springs, Petrolia, Alvinston and Warwick, is owned, operated and maintained by Hydro One; and

“Whereas there have been a total of 126 power failures at the Wanstead Transmission Station over the last two years, cutting power to the surrounding communities, leading to property damage in countless homes from

sewer pump failure and flooding, to expensive equipment damage in small businesses and industrial facilities; and

“Whereas Hydro One has no plans to remedy the situation before 2018;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requesting that the Minister of Energy direct Hydro One to immediately begin the work of upgrading the Wanstead Transmission Station and all supporting feeder and distribution lines, so that all residents and businesses in the communities of Oil Springs, Petrolia, Alvinston and Warwick have access to consistent, dependable power.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it down with Maja.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I am pleased to rise here today and read this petition for an east Toronto French secondary school for grades 7 to 12.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

“Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

“Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

“Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

“Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that ‘... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto’; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

1600

“Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

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

“That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to” home.

Monsieur le Président, je suis d’accord. I’m going to affix my name to this and give it to page Vida. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that petition—I mean, speech.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Whereas vulnerable senior citizens in need of hospital care are being referred to respite care in retirement residences ill-equipped to deal with severe patients’ health issues; and

“Whereas such referrals place a significant financial burden on patients’ families, often in excess of \$3,000 per month; and

“Whereas these referrals are unnecessary when local hospitals have available beds but cannot afford to use or staff them due to funding cuts;

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

“To immediately cease the practice of referring vulnerable senior patients to respite care in retirement residences, ensure patients in need of acute care are treated in hospitals and to review all funding arrangements in order to enable hospitals to operate all available beds and wards.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Ella.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I don’t have a petition—just kidding.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas social assistance benefits in Ontario leave recipients far below the poverty line, struggling to meet the basic costs of living, and without any resources to handle emergencies;

“Whereas the provincial government recently cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit;

“Whereas the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit helped families pay for basic utilities in emergency situations and helped prevent people from becoming homeless;

“Whereas this program provided options for vulnerable people including women, children and people with disabilities to escape domestic violence and transition to safer housing;

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

“That the province of Ontario restore full funding for the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and ensure that it goes directly to those who need it.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Elijah to deliver.

YORK REGION CHAIR

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Bill 42, Municipal Amendment Act (Election of Chair of York Region), 2014

“Whereas the regional chair and CEO of York region is currently appointed by York region council; and

“Whereas the position of regional chair and CEO of York region is an office of significant influence, including a nearly \$3-billion budget;

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

“That the government pass the Municipal Amendment Act, resulting in the regional chair and CEO of York region being elected by the residents of York region.”

I attach my signature and give it to page Hannah.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I approve of this petition, sign it and give it to page Johann.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member, just in time, from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province’s social, economic and multicultural fabric;

“We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport.”

I am very happy to support this petition, Speaker. I will sign my name and hand it to page Kelsey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland, I’ll inform you that she had two seconds when she stood up. You seemed concerned about that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Out of turn?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, okay.

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I’m required to put the question—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, sorry. Orders of the day. Now you’ve got me all confused. Everybody’s crying and complaining, and they’ve got me all confused.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let's try this again. Pursuant to the order of House passed earlier today, I'm now required to call the question.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I have a slip for vote deferral: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on this reading of Bill 35 be deferred until after question period tomorrow, December 4.

Second reading vote deferred.

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Ms. Damerla moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2014 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Damerla has the floor.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I am truly pleased to rise today to speak further to our proposed new legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, that I introduced on November 24.

Before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge a few special visitors who are with us in the House today. We are joined, in the members' gallery, by Joanne Di Nardo and Rowena Pinto from the Canadian Cancer Society; and also Chris Yaccato from the Ontario Lung Association. Many of us know Chris from his previous

life working in the Speaker's office. I also want to recognize three youth advocates from the Lung Association: Monica Sarkar, Vicki Poullos and Janna Patrick.

Thank you so much, to every single one of you, for being here and for your hard work, your advocacy on behalf of all Ontarians. Your efforts, I can truly say, have played a key role in bringing this proposed legislation to the House today.

Speaker, before I go any further, I do want to say that I will be sharing my time with my two parliamentary assistants, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Halton.

1610

Before I proceed, I also want to acknowledge the work done by the former Minister of Health, Minister Deb Matthews, on this file, as well as the work done by the member from Nickel Belt on the wellness file. I want to acknowledge her contributions.

Speaker, I want to start by saying that as the associate minister responsible for wellness, I believe that prevention is better than cure, and it is in that context that we have introduced this bill. I believe that as legislators we can play an essential role. We can help ensure Ontarians have the information they need to make better choices about staying healthy, and we can also help to protect Ontarians, especially the youngest amongst us, from dangers to their health and well-being.

The bill before us contains three pieces of proposed legislation. While each schedule of this bill is distinct, all of them are predicated on the idea that if you eat better, exercise more and smoke less, up to 90% of type 2 diabetes, 80% of coronary heart disease and a third of all cancers can be avoided. It is in the context of these numbers that we're introducing this bill.

I want to begin by speaking first about smoking less. We all know the dangers of tobacco smoke, and our government has taken action to protect our kids from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. In fact, this legislation falls on the heels of the amendments we recently made to regulations under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds and publicly owned sports fields and surfaces, the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses, and smoking on bar and restaurant patios.

The intent of the first part of this proposed legislation is the same: to limit the access of our children to tobacco and to protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke. The idea is very simple. If we are truly serious about making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada, we have to prevent the next generation of smokers, we have to prevent our children from taking up smoking. Our record on tobacco control through the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy has made Ontario a leading jurisdiction in this area.

I'm pleased to say that partly as a result of our efforts, smoking rates have decreased in Ontario, from 24.5% in 2000 to 18.1% in 2013. That's over 300,000 fewer smokers in Ontario. Today, Ontario has the second-lowest smoking rates in Canada, after BC, but we want

Ontario to be the jurisdiction with the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

We've also taken strong action to reduce the supply of low-cost illegal tobacco. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for his dedication to getting illegal tobacco off the streets. Ontario's enforcement activities have resulted in the successful seizure of more than 235 million illegal cigarettes, 3.2 million untaxed cigars and 95 million grams of untaxed fine cut or other tobacco products over the past six years. Just yesterday, we posted regulations for our tobacco oversight system, which will cut down on the availability of raw leaf contraband tobacco. These regulations will come into force on January 1, 2015.

But there is more to be done. I am proud of our record, but I'm also determined to have the lowest smoking rate in the country.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. It also poses a significant financial burden on the province. Since most people start smoking young, preventing young people from taking up tobacco is a particularly effective way to achieve our goal of making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada, and more importantly, improving health outcomes. Protecting young Ontarians from exposure to second-hand smoke is just as important. It is these compelling facts that form the backdrop against which we need to consider the proposed legislation.

This bill, if passed, would impose a ban on the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol. To prevent kids from starting to smoke and becoming regular smokers, we propose to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and Ontario regulation 48/06 made under it, by prohibiting the sale of flavoured tobacco products. The ban would apply to all flavoured tobacco products, including cigarettes, blunt wraps, cigars, pipe tobacco, smokeless tobacco and water pipe tobacco.

We're also proposing a ban on menthol-flavoured tobacco, after a phase-in period of up to two years. This represents a difference from the proposal we brought before the House a year ago. And members may wonder what has changed. Well, what has changed, Speaker, is new evidence. We have new, compelling evidence which shows that young people often become regular smokers when they start off with flavoured tobacco, especially so when they're smoking menthol. In 2012-13, for instance, 57,000 Ontario students in grades 6 to 12 lit up using flavoured tobacco. Almost half of these young smokers used flavoured tobacco. One in four smoked menthol cigarettes, making it by far the most popular flavour amongst youth. And menthol users smoke almost a pack more per week compared with non-menthol smokers.

The US Food and Drug Administration released a scientific evaluation in 2013 which found that menthol flavouring in cigarettes, by cooling the throat and reducing the harsh sensation of tobacco, makes it more tolerable for new smokers. That increases the chances of addiction and makes it harder for young smokers to quit. Based on these findings, the FDA concluded that menthol-flavoured cigarettes likely pose a public health

risk above that seen with non-menthol-flavoured cigarettes.

The FDA shares the concerns of a number of public health and tobacco control organizations which have publicly supported banning the sale of menthol-flavoured tobacco products, including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the Ontario Medical Association.

In October of this year, the OMA in a news release urged the government to ban menthol-flavoured tobacco products, given the new evidence that has emerged showing that underage smokers who use menthol cigarettes smoke more often, and are more likely to continue the habit later in life.

The second part of this proposed legislation deals with electronic cigarettes, commonly called e-cigarettes. Our approach is specifically aimed at preventing minors from accessing and taking up the use of e-cigarettes. The proposed legislation would define e-cigarettes as those with or without nicotine, and would regulate the sale, display, promotion and use of the products.

If passed, the legislation would bring about a number of important changes.

First, it would ban the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19, and require retailers to request ID from anyone who appears to be under 25. It would also require retailers to post signs explaining age-based sales restrictions. It would also prohibit a person from using false identification to purchase e-cigarettes.

It would prohibit the display and promotion of e-cigarettes at points of sale and prevent a place of entertainment from employing or authorizing anyone to promote e-cigarettes at the place of entertainment. The sale of e-cigarettes would also be prohibited in places such as vending machines, health care facilities and schools.

The use of e-cigarettes would not be allowed in certain enclosed public places, and employers and proprietors would need to ensure compliance.

It would protect home health care workers from the potential harmful effects of e-cigarette vapour.

It would give inspectors the power to enforce the legislation and ensure compliance.

Lastly, the legislation, if passed, would make it an offence to violate the proposed legislation, and establish maximum fines.

We recognize that e-cigarettes are a new product and an emerging concern. I believe that this should remain a legal and accessible product for adults, but I also believe we must act today to protect kids. We have now had a generation of Ontarians who have grown up in the province where lighting up a cigarette in a restaurant or on a GO Train is unacceptable. We don't want to turn back the clock.

But on the other hand, we want to leave the door open to the possibility that e-cigarettes may be able to help some smokers break their addiction. Right now, my ministry is supporting research into these areas. In the meantime, we have designed this legislation to provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with the regulation-

making authority to address emerging issues as evidence becomes available. For example, if evidence emerges that e-cigarettes are useful as cessation aids, we may want to reconsider both the prohibition of sale in certain places and the point-of-sale display ban. This proposed legislation would give the government the authority to do so.

1620

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the third part of this legislation, which is the posting of calories in restaurants. Under the proposed legislation, any food service premises or restaurant that has more than 20 locations in Ontario would have to post the calorie content next to the menu board. They would also have to provide contextual information, such as the average amount of calories an adult should be taking in a day, to give context to the calories that being posted.

I want to say that this portion of the legislation has a particular resonance for me. I want to share a story that some of you might be able to relate to. In my first campaign, in 2011, one of the things I was looking forward to was that I would lose some weight. They say you run for office for a reason. As all of us in this House know, we are literally on the run. I was looking forward to losing some weight. As it turned out, at the end of that election I actually gained weight. I was a little surprised at that, but I didn't think much of it until one day—am I okay for time? I have these people signalling me, so I just wanted to make sure.

To continue, one fine day, I Googled some information and realized that a medium Iced Capp at Tim Hortons can have up to 400 calories. That particular election, you may remember, was in a very hot summer. I was drinking two and sometimes three cups of Iced Capp, thinking, "Oh well, I'm walking so much." But I didn't realize how many calories an Iced Capp packs. To have that kind of contextual information, to be able to go into a Tim Hortons or any other restaurant and say, "This muffin has so many calories," or, "This Iced Capp has so many calories," I believe is powerful information that will enable Ontarians to eat in a healthy manner and make decisions, and most importantly, empower Ontarians to make those decisions.

All in all, I'm very pleased to present this bill, which is aimed at helping Ontario become the lowest-smoking jurisdiction and helping Ontarians make healthy choices when it comes to what we eat, with particular emphasis on our children. I believe it is a bill that will have all-party support, because how can we disagree with making Ontario a healthier place, particularly for our children? I look forward to a robust debate, and I look forward to constructive feedback. Hopefully, all members in this Legislature will support this bill.

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise and expand on the remarks by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on our proposed Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, introduced on November 24. I plan to speak on the elements of the proposed

legislation dealing with the ban on flavoured tobacco. Taking these steps would strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and help us reach our goal of having the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

As we all know, there are very compelling reasons for tackling tobacco use. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death, preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. In fact, tobacco use accounts for close to 13,000 deaths a year in Ontario. Think about all the families who have lost loved ones to painful, preventable deaths.

Secondly, smoking places an enormous burden on our health care system. The numbers speak for themselves. Smoking causes 80% of lung cancers and 80% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease cases. In fact, every year, tobacco-related disease costs the province an estimated \$2.2 billion in direct health care expenses and an additional \$5.3 billion in indirect costs such as lost productivity. Studies suggest that second-hand smoke exposure alone accounts for 10% of tobacco-related costs; that is, costs of direct health care as well as indirect costs from reduced productivity.

Simply put, lowering tobacco usage across the province will save money and save lives. That's why, in 2005, our government created the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. That plan positioned Ontario as a national and international leader in tobacco control.

Most recently, last month, our government announced that we are taking further actions to reduce kids' access to tobacco and to protect the people of Ontario from exposure to tobacco smoke. We amended the regulation under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking on and around playgrounds and publicly owned sports fields and surfaces. We are also prohibiting the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses. And as of January 1, 2015, Ontarians will no longer be able to light up on bar and restaurant patios.

Through these measures, we are working to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and make it more difficult for young people to buy tobacco. Why are we taking these steps? Because it's the right thing to do. We know smoking is unhealthy, we know it costs the health care system and we know it takes lives.

Now it's time to go one step further. In our 2014 budget, our government committed to prohibiting the sale of tobacco products that contain flavours and additives that appeal to youth. Flavoured tobacco products are one of the few remaining ways that tobacco companies have to target our kids. Youth smokers are particularly susceptible to the availability of flavoured tobacco products. Research shows that flavoured tobacco products can result in young people becoming regular smokers. We're talking about flavours that are directly designed to appeal to young people, like strawberry, watermelon and even bubble gum. In fact, even the bright packaging for these cigarettes appears at times to be designed to appeal to a young smoker. As a mother of a teenager, I can tell you this is of great concern. There's no question that flavoured tobacco has become a gateway to addiction for youth.

In Canada, flavoured tobacco makes up roughly 5% of the tobacco market, and menthol-flavoured cigarettes make up over half of the flavoured tobacco market. Recent research from the US Food and Drug Administration and here in Ontario shows that menthol's cooling effect can reduce the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more tolerable for new smokers and making youth more likely to become habitual smokers. In fact, Canada's 2012-13 Youth Smoking Survey found that, as the minister mentioned, one in four Ontario high school students report having smoked menthol cigarettes in the last 30 days.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to act on flavoured tobacco, and we are going to do that by banning all flavours, be it bubble gum, watermelon or mint. With this bold action, we are working to prevent the next generation of Ontarians from becoming addicted to tobacco. Our partners in the health care, public health and tobacco control sectors are very supportive of banning the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol.

Finally, this legislation also proposes to strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing the fines for youth-related sales offences like selling tobacco to minors, making them the highest in Canada. Furthermore, it would strengthen inspection and enforcement powers.

I'd like to thank the many Ontarians who are highly supportive of our efforts to curb tobacco use in the province. Working together, I know we can have the lowest smoking rate in Canada, and I know we can work together to save lives and make us a healthier society.

I urge all members to support our proposed legislation. Taking these steps will save money and save many young lives.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to expand on the remarks by Minister Damerla, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and my colleague from Halton on the proposed legislation, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, that our government introduced on November 24. Specifically, I will speak further regarding the elements of the proposed legislation dealing with e-cigarettes and menu labelling.

Our government is committed to keeping Ontarians healthy, which is a major pillar of our action plan for health care. Part of that commitment is to have the lowest prevalence of smoking in Canada. We're close to that goal, second only to British Columbia right now, but we need to do better. One of the best ways to reach our goal is to prevent our young people from taking up smoking in the first place, whether it is regular cigarettes or electronic cigarettes, commonly called e-cigarettes.

1630

These e-cigarettes are electronic devices that are made of plastic or metal and consists of a battery, an atomizer and a cartridge. The cartridge can contain flavouring and nicotine. The atomizer heats the liquid and turns it into

vapour that the user inhales. The vapour is not smoke. It looks like smoke and it may have an odour. E-cigarettes do not use tobacco or any combustion as a delivery system, and therefore are not regulated under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. This means we need to take action to regulate this emerging technology. E-cigarettes are increasing in popularity, particularly among adolescents, because they are cheaper to use than tobacco cigarettes, easier to access and are perceived as low-risk.

Speaker, it was shocking to learn that right now kids can purchase e-cigarettes, anywhere, any time they like. They can use those e-cigarettes to "vape"—another new term in the technological world—anywhere—restaurants, sports fields—where you can't smoke right now. We do know that there is limited evidence right now regarding the impact of e-cigarettes on our health. It is even possible that e-cigarettes might at some point be approved in the future as devices that can help people quit their addiction to tobacco.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then why are you banning them?

Mr. John Fraser: At this time, however—thank you for asking—we simply don't know their health effects or how effective e-cigarettes may be as a possible tobacco cessation aid or what, if any relationship, exists between e-cigarette use and the uptake of tobacco smoking. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be funding two Ontario research projects so we can learn more about these topics.

Some health stakeholders have argued that e-cigarettes could be harnessed as a tobacco cessation device, but many are concerned that e-cigarettes could act as a gateway for youth to tobacco use and normalize the behaviour of smoking, jeopardizing Ontario's tobacco control efforts. Experts from the World Health Organization, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Cancer Care Ontario have all called for a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, restrictions on their use in public places and restrictions on their advertising and promotion.

We are proposing this legislation to protect our kids, and we're building in the flexibility to respond to the changing technology and evolving knowledge about the effects of e-cigarettes. I want to make this very clear: that it is not our government's intention to remove e-cigarettes from the Ontario marketplace. We are not banning e-cigarettes. Rather, the proposed approach would take action to protect Ontario's children and youth from accessing and using a product that may pose potential harm to their health. It is a careful response to an emerging technology which may be harmful and thwart our efforts to reduce tobacco use in Ontario. And we are not alone. Three provinces have indicated they are examining a range of options related to e-cigarettes. In November, Nova Scotia received third reading and royal assent to similar legislation regulating e-cigarettes.

Mr. Speaker, right now I'd like to say a few things about menu labelling, which is part of our action plan's

commitment to keep Ontarians healthy and improve our children's lives. That's why we appointed the Healthy Kids Panel in 2012. The panel heard from many parents who said they need more help to make the healthy choice for their kids the easy choice every time. Ipsos Reid did a survey recently where 95% of Ontarians support fast food restaurants listing nutrition information on their menus. Our proposed legislation responds directly to this need. The legislation, if passed, would require large chain restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service premises with 20 locations or more that serve prepared food in Ontario to include calories on their menus. This legislation will not apply to small restaurants with a handful of locations.

This is a key component of our Healthy Kids Strategy, which tackles the serious issue of childhood obesity, one of the great risks affecting the health of young Ontarians. Studies show that 28% of Ontario children and youth are overweight or obese, and in some communities that number is even higher. We know that a large proportion of obese children—75%—grow up to become obese adults, and it's well documented that adult obesity can lead to an increased risk for chronic diseases and conditions like certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

Many labels at the point of purchase have been shown to increase awareness of nutrition information and have been shown to influence consumer behaviour. In addition to helping parents keep their kids healthy, posting caloric information on standard food and beverage items will also help adults make healthy choices. If an adult consumes alcoholic drinks, the calories in those drinks should be considered as part of their daily caloric intake.

It was clear from the outset that improving the health of our kids would not be possible without strong industry partnerships. We know the government can't do it alone. That's why I want to thank industry leaders for their support in the effort. Some large chain restaurants have already been providing nutritional information for their customers, and I applaud their support for our efforts to provide Ontarians with even more access to this information.

I know that by working together, we can help families make healthier choices. I urge all members to support our proposed legislation.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to stand and address Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

Speaker, you know what? There isn't one person on our side, on our PC caucus, who wants to see health care costs rise in this province, although they are escalating. I think the government needs to be spending their money wisely; it's something that perhaps they need to take a good, close look at. We want a healthy Ontario, because we know that down the road, perhaps our health care costs would be lessened.

One of the things that we talk about here is shutting down those illegal smoke shacks. That's lost revenue right now, and a lot of people will go and buy those smokes because of the fact that they're less expensive—

and of course, the government's not getting any revenue from those things.

We talk about childhood obesity and we also talk about children being overweight. There's three words that I'm compelled to say, and those three words are: You gotta wanna—forget the grammar in that. I think it's important: Children have got to want to.

As a parent, we can oversee the types of foods and the food selections, and we can encourage better food selections for our children. But one of the other things that I think is also important here is the fact that maybe the government should look at—this may be a little bit off-topic, but it's to the point. I remember back when I was in high school, one of the things that helped keep me in shape—I was in shape back then; now round is a shape. Never mind. The point being, maybe they should consider having physical education not just as one credit, but having it as four credits, one per year for every year that the students are in. That would keep them more consciously aware of getting in better shape.

The last thing I want to talk about very quickly is caloric count. One of the things I found is that I went to McDonald's one time and I was so disappointed when I looked at the menu and said, "Oh, I wanted to have this, this and this, and I can't have this." So all I did was I order a coffee, and I felt bad—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very glad to contribute to the debate on Bill 45, because I know the member from Nickel Belt, our critic for health and long-term care, has been pushing for this bill to come forward. She is very much an advocate for labelling, because if we don't know what we're putting in our bodies, it's very difficult to make those healthy choices. I know the member from Nickel Belt isn't here today; she's going to be speaking to this bill later on.

Flavoured tobacco: That was something else that France brought up. It was very important, because we had a lobby day when this was first introduced and was becoming an awareness piece. I went down to the legislative dining room and there was a display of products. They were all wrapped and they were colourful, and they looked like actual candy. I took a picture of the products that were on display and I tweeted it out. It really brought home that the way these products are packaged, the way they are full of colour, is actually targeting—they're marketing to their clientele, the future smokers, which are children.

So I'm glad to see that we are looking very strongly at eliminating flavoured tobacco, and also at the labelling on food and in restaurants so people know, when they go out, that they have an option, they have a choice, and they can be aware of those choices before they put food in their mouth or cigarettes in their body. I'm glad this is forward, and I look forward to further debate from New Democrats.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a pleasure it is to rise and speak to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's bill and the wonderful words we received from my seatmate here from Halton and John Fraser, of course, from Ottawa South. Thank you so much.

The three pieces of this bill are so important. First off, we've got to do everything we can to reduce opportunities for smoking. I know you agree. I know you agree and we agree that's a critical piece of this bill: that we want to make sure smoking—and those of us who have not been able to resist the temptations of the evil weed and once in a while still indulge, we hope that the message we're sending here will encourage those people to not have the occasional smoke, because it's unacceptable. We're hoping very much that yes, this bill will encourage them.

Targeting kids with flavoured tobaccos: We know this is something that has to be regulated. It has to be stopped, and it has to be stopped now.

Now, the second piece on the e-cigs, let's be very clear: We're taking a precautionary approach here. We want to be able to have the capacity to regulate because the science is not clear to all of us yet.

There are people in Beaches–East York who sell e-cigarettes—Maria at a wonderful shop called The Ecig Flavourium, right on Queen Street in the Beach. She sells them. She's concerned about this legislation. It might affect her livelihood. That's not our intention. We want to make sure that the science is correct so that it's properly regulated. I know she and many others are using e-cigarettes as a replacement for what they used to do when they smoked. They didn't smoke all the time, but they're using the e-cigarettes as an opportunity to get off cigarettes. They believe that by over-regulating it we will be forcing people back to the evil weed, back to the very disastrous health outcomes. We need to stop that. If this is, in fact, helping people and it does not have negative effects, we want to make sure that we're not interfering with the rights of people to do so.

As for calories on food menus, there can be no substitute for good consumer awareness for healthy eating choices, and I hope this assists in the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I wanted a chance to speak to this bill. There are many parts to the bill that I think we all agree with, certainly when it comes to our youth. As far as e-cigarettes, I guess it concerns me because I know a lot of people are using them to get off cigarettes. There's no science anywhere that shows that they're a problem for you or anybody else, so I'm not sure why we want to put them under the same scrutiny as cigarettes. They are non-combustible, so the elements that cause the problems aren't in e-cigarettes.

We've already beat up a lot of people, generally seniors—we used to give them to our veterans, and now we are coming back as they get immobile, not letting them smoke in buildings. I think that the e-cigarettes are

a great way to get off. We've been told that. I think there should be a little bit of scrutiny on that, because I think that there is no science to prove that they are a detriment, and they are actually a benefit for people trying to quit.

Flavoured cigarettes, I think, are a no-brainer. We don't want children smoking—and they are an enticement. But I would encourage the government to rethink the other part and to not restrict them in certain areas. They aren't a problem. They aren't a problem for anybody else like normal cigarettes, and there's no science to prove that, so let's use the science and actually look at something that may be of benefit to many people. It is a vapour.

We want to make sure, of course, that they do comply—they are a form of food and go through the same processes as normal food does for testing to make sure they are safe; but if they are, again, this is not a nanny state. Let's let people make their own decisions on things that are not harmful to themselves or anybody else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has two minutes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking all of the members who spoke on this bill, including the members for Chatham–Kent–Essex, Beaches–East York, London–Fanshawe and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; and, of course, the parliamentary assistants, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Halton. I also want to thank all of you for your support, but I did want to address a few things.

I know that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex raised the issue of enforcement and contraband, and I just want to say, absolutely. There isn't one tool in the toolbox to reduce smoking in Ontario. We need to use all of the tools that are available in the toolbox. Our fall economic statement made it very clear that tackling the underground economy, including contraband cigarettes, is indeed a focus for this government. So thank you for that. I look forward to working with you on that.

I also wanted to address an issue that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry raised, which is that we do recognize that electronic cigarettes are separate from tobacco, and we made a deliberate decision to create stand-alone legislation for electronic cigarettes. If you wanted to treat it as tobacco, the easiest thing would have been for us to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and add the words “electronic cigarettes.”

We could have done it that way, but we recognize that electronic cigarettes are new, and evidence might come that does suggest that indeed they are good cessation devices. If that is the case, we've deliberately created the legislation with the flexibility to respond to that through regulations. We do recognize that there is a difference between them, but we also recognize the risk that—let's face it, they are being marketed with the word “cigarette” attached to them, so there are confusing signals being sent. So we've tried to manage the risk—they're still legal, but also manage the risk that they might renormal-

ize regular cigarettes. We've tried to balance that, and I hope that addresses your issue.

On balance, I look forward to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure today to bring some comments and thoughts to Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

There's been a fair bit of discussion on this. I'm going to try to provide a bit of a balanced thought process. I'm going to break it out. There are three parts to the act, three schedules. The first schedule is the Healthy Menu Choices Act, and that will require food service premises with 20 or more locations to post calorie information for both food and beverages on their menus.

There are definitely some pros. It would support helping Ontarians to make informed—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are some real lively debates going on and I'm having trouble hearing the man who is speaking, so if you want to have your caucus meeting, the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, you can go outside and have it.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased that you're listening so intently.

A pro is certainly to support helping Ontarians make informed choices for themselves and their families. Many people eat at least a third of food away from home—certainly we at Queen's Park do; we're here most of the week—

Interjection: Two thirds.

Mr. Bill Walker: Two thirds, and some of my colleagues, like the member from Essex, even look in the mirror at times—I mean, look at the menu every now and again. We eat in restaurants or we're picking up prepared food on the fly. Certainly, in our lifestyles, it's one of those things that we have to be cautious of as parliamentarians, and a lot of our staff as well. We keep pretty hectic schedules. We're on the fly; we grab food wherever we can. This will help a little bit.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle are showing me that they're getting more round and rotund in this lifestyle, but I'm sure this will help them as well.

One of the things that I think no one will argue with—and this is a worldwide epidemic—is that obesity is on the rise. Certainly, more specifically and closer to home, I think the stats show that 30 years of too many calories in and too few calories burned—and one third of our children, sadly, are more obese, again, rounder and weaker physically than they were 30 years ago.

There are a lot of factors that can contribute to that. When I was a young guy, you were always on the ball diamond, on the hockey rink, on the soccer pitch; you were always out of the house doing things. Now, with a

lot more of the electronic opportunities, a lot of kids, sadly, are becoming couch potatoes. That definitely has increased. When they're making poor food choices—and a lot of our foods, again, are not as wholesome, they're not as healthy; a lot of sugar-based products.

I read a stat a little while ago that it takes three cupfuls of spinach to get the same good calorie content that used to take one cup many years ago. That is because of the way we've produced foods. We're always in a hurry to get things to market, we're trying to get things to the shelf quicker, into the consumption cycle quicker, but the health is what got missed along the way.

My original occupation was a recreation director, so I'm a big believer in healthy living, active living, keeping people healthier rather than trying to fix them once they are ill or, in this case, their health goes to a point where we're needing—you know, being overweight is a real big leader towards heart and stroke concerns and certainly cancer concerns.

1650

We have some guests in the crowd, and I'm not going to try to remember all the names now and reference them, but I know they're here every year, bringing us as MPPs the newest and latest thought processes on what we need to be doing. I applaud them and all the volunteers in their organizations for continuing to work. Certainly, in my great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, a lot of the volunteers, with the support of their organizations, are coming into my office each year, more than once, giving me an update, trying to ensure that I stand in this House and do the right things for the people in my riding.

Obesity, sadly—and I'm going to focus on this a fair bit—truly does lead to diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart disease. It costs the provincial health care system \$4.5 billion. That's \$1.65 billion in direct health care costs and \$2.87 billion in indirect costs. I trust that, if we really looked at it conclusively, there's even more of a ripple effect and it's an even bigger number, which is sad. Just think what we could be doing with that money if we were using it for proactive, healthy measures and we were actually helping to keep people more healthy, particularly our children, and setting examples for all of our children out there.

In my estimation—and I believe my caucus colleagues and I would hope all members of this House would believe that we need to make fighting childhood obesity a public priority. It certainly is something that is impacting all of us as the public. It's something there needs to be a lot more focus on. If we don't, obesity will overwhelm our health budget. I think, again, if you look at any of the majors papers that are out now, they're saying that this is, all over the world, becoming more and more of an epidemic. It's something we have to address, and we have to be proactive and be very firm in our commitment to do that.

Banning junk food and slapping calorie stickers on food is just one part of it. Certainly, there's nothing as a negative; it certainly is a positive step in the right direction. But we can't be naive enough to think that just

because we put a sticker on food or we put a sign in a building, that's going to solve our ills. So we have to really think about that.

As I say, I think all of us have a duty to be a role model. Myself, I'm proud to say in the last year and a half, partly because of the lifestyle here—you know, we work a lot. We are on the fly. We eat a lot of unhealthy foods. A lot of the foods that are created even here in Queen's Park, sadly, are the fast food variety. You can get caught up because you're trying to grab a snack here and a nibble here. But for me, I actually decided that I'm going to start running, I'm going to start biking and trying to eat a lot healthier, and grabbing, instead of all the sugary products that I used to—and I still like all those sugary products; I'm certainly no saint—the carrot stick and the celery a whole lot more often nowadays. Even something as simple as more water in your system—my mom was a big believer in that eight-glasses-a-day-of-water principle. I have to say that, in here, I drink a lot of water, but it takes a lot of training for me to actually reach for the glass of water, which we all know, and it's proven, is a good thing.

So I would encourage all those listeners out there and folks here in the House and those at home: Consume more water. Consume more of the vegetables, less of the sugars. Sugar is a big, big piece. I dropped about 20 pounds with this. I didn't eat nearly as many breads and the starchy foods with all the sugars in them. The running and the biking, certainly—and it was interesting how many of my colleagues actually noticed that I'd dropped some weight. It's been challenging since the election to—

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Turn to the side.

Mr. Bill Walker: There you go. Did it work?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I can't see you.

Mr. Bill Walker: You know what? I wasn't turning right around there.

But it's something that, from my past, I really want to promote the physical activity and the ability that you can control your diet.

Not all of us are created the same. I know a lot of my friends when I was growing up said, "Walker, you've got a very good metabolism," because I would eat at one sister's house at about 4:15, I would go to my second sister's house and eat at about 5:10-ish, and my mom would get home from work at about 6 and create a third meal, and I would eat all three of those and, in those days, never put on a pound. I'm not certain I would attempt—well, I might attempt it, but I probably couldn't have the end result.

So again, physical activity is a big piece of this. While I congratulate the minister on bringing this forward—I think there is a lot of merit in it—I don't think we can stop there and just rest, that this is going to be the panacea to fix all things.

I also want to tip my hat to the minister. I was concerned that there was an announcement about this. I wasn't given advance notice. I would have liked to have at least known that there was going to be an announce-

ment coming. I asked her for a briefing very shortly after, and to her credit, she did do that. I had that briefing with her senior staff yesterday and was appreciative of that. It was good to be able to bring a lot of the concerns I had from my constituency and on behalf of my caucus colleagues to her bureaucrats, because there is still time.

I'm going to encourage everyone out there—there will be at least a 45-day period, if this legislation moves through the House, to have comment. I hope, truly, that they will listen to some of the positive, constructive feedback we offer, because I think any piece of legislation can be improved if people are open and willing to listen. I think we need to ensure that all of the people, particularly the stakeholders who are going to be impacted the most, are at that table. One of the key ones I asked about was: "Was the restaurant industry as a whole in that room?" They're going to have the most impact. They're going to be the people who are going to have to adhere to and abide by it, and what we don't want are unintended consequences that are going to put a hardship on them if we don't do this in a thoughtful, methodical manner. We have to make sure we do that.

I'm going to talk a little bit about some cons. Again, it's not really a con, that this piece isn't good, but I think we could go a lot further. The biggest of that is, again, we want some concrete action. A promotion is a step, but it's not going to necessarily make sure it happens. Putting a sign in a restaurant isn't going to necessarily happen. Putting a label on a product isn't necessarily—it's a step in the right direction, it can be helpful, but it's not the only thing and it's not the one thing that's going to move.

I would have liked to have seen a lot more in that bill—and I've been talking about it for the first number of minutes of my speech today—that physical activity should be the number one priority: people moving and being active. That doesn't mean—I think a lot of people get caught up, when you start talking about this, that you have to be a jock; you have to play a sport. No, a walk around the block three times a week or even 10 or 15 minutes a day is a good thing for any one of us out there; swimming 15 or 20 minutes a day, going for a bicycle ride—any physical activity. Vacuuming: My wife will throw that one out at me—and I trust yours would too, Speaker—that we could do that a lot more and help ourselves at the same time and maybe even give her a bit of a break, but I look at it that that's really my way of helping her stay in shape. But we digress. We won't go there too far.

Physical activity is absolutely a path—and I think it was about a week and a half ago that the Premier actually made an announcement of an hour of physical activity a day in school. I applaud her for that. Again, I don't think it's enough. It should be more than an hour. It should be absolutely mandatory, and it shouldn't just be public school. What I saw even in my day was that a lot of people took physical education while they had to, when it was mandatory in public school, and the day they got to high school, they stopped doing that. Coincidentally, they started smoking at a young age and then they stopped the

physical activity. I'm sure there are people in this House who might have done some of those same things. That's a double-whammy then, because you're not as active and you're starting to do the bad habits.

Keeping active for at least one hour a day lowers the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure—all of those things that we're hearing about and that consume major amounts of our health care system. Again, it's very challenging for me—I work very close to the health care industry—to see people who had smoked or had allowed themselves to become extremely obese and then drain that system very strongly for many, many years trying to reverse all of those.

Sadly, I've lost a sister to lung cancer—a strong, heavy smoker for many years. She started at a very young age and, sadly, she's not with me anymore. I've said in this House before, and I'll say it again: The worst day and a half of my life was to sit in that hospital and physically watch her fade away, see that black, porous, horrible stuff coursing out of her veins and through the systems. So I'm very dedicated when it comes to this, and I'll talk about the other two a little bit more as to smoke-free. That was one of those cases—and she was fairly active, but that smoking was absolutely, at the end of the day, the thing, and no one will ever convince me differently. That was the thing that took her from us at the age of 43.

My dad died of emphysema: again, a heavy smoker. Sadly, my mom passed away from cancer. She wasn't a smoker, but obviously there were some things and probably all that second-hand smoke, I trust, is where a lot of that may have come from because, in her generation, most of her family were smokers, most of it in cars and in an enclosed house. Again, I'm very concerned about those types of things.

Thank goodness, my next sister to me in age has quit smoking. It was losing our sister that actually catapulted her to say—you know what? She tried a couple of times. I can remember my two sisters when I was younger, saying, "If it ever gets to three bucks a pack, I'm going to quit." I think it was about seven or eight bucks a pack and they were still smoking. When my sister passed away from it, gratefully and thankfully for my sister, that was the thing that made her actually stop. She used some nicotine products—NicoDerm or whatever it was. She went to a hypnotist. Whatever it was, it finally allowed her—and thank goodness. She is a cancer survivor, and hopefully she's going to be with us for many more years. Again, she did the 180. She stopped doing the unhealthy things. Now she walks more. Now she's outside a lot more. She's doing the healthy, public things that she can.

Bill 45, sadly, really has no mention or no significant mention of anything about physical activity, and certainly nothing in there from my perspective that is going to make it, if you will, mandatory. I'm not going to be too derogatory in this regard to the government, but they like to bring a lot of things in, saying, "You shall not," or, "You shall." In this case, I would have really loved—and it would have been easier for me—to get everyone on

board to support and say, "Why would you not do that?" We know physical activity makes us healthier. We know it helps our health care system. More importantly, it helps the good health of all of our wonderful citizens.

1700

This bill includes just one recommendation from the panel: a calorie count. It's unclear how the calorie count on menus will be standardized. One of the things I asked yesterday in the briefing was, have you really thought this through? Because what you don't want to do is create chaos. We've certainly had other situations where they've had people come in as inspectors, they go the nth degree of the law and they just keep making it harder and harder for businesses to stay in business. In today's economic climate, with all the people unemployed, we can't add any more burdens to business that are going to put more people out of work and create more people needing our public programs and services.

With the minister in the House today, I want to make sure she understands that that's the feedback I'm getting about this bill from my colleagues and from our constituents, who we hear from collectively. It's unclear how, exactly, enforcement by the public health unit inspectors will work. We asked questions about, "Are you going to add more inspectors?" Is that really what the intent is? Is that really where we want to put our time, energy and resources? Or is it actually in programs that will ensure that kids and adults are getting that type of daily activity they need, which can be much more beneficial than someone in a uniform going out and trying to—because that just puts a negative spin on a lot of the things that are sometimes unintended consequences by government, which for all the right reasons wants to do this. But inspection isn't necessarily the way we want—there are proactive ways that we can get people to be more active. That will have a much bigger degree of success at the end of the day.

I've asked the minister's staff to provide us with a list to ensure that all of the right stakeholders are in the room and have their ability to speak. I've asked for a list of who they consulted on this bill specifically. I'm going to say it again today: There will be at least a 45-day period after the bill gets through the process here at Queen's Park to be able to give your feedback. I encourage every single person out there—individuals, businesses, associations—to definitely wade in on this bill on all three components.

Again, the ministry can't say how burdensome this effort will be. If we're changing menus, whether it's a small business or a large business, a good thing I think, particularly in rural Ontario, because we have a lot of small mom-and-pop types of businesses, is that you have to have 20 locations before this is really going to impact you; so that's good. But for those businesses above that, just a change of one item on that label—do you have to pull everything off the shelf? Do you have to take it back to the redistribution centre to do that? Who's paying to have that label changed and moved? You certainly don't want an inspector to come, giving a fine or going down

that path to a shop owner if a label has just changed in the last little bit. So I wanted to hear the details of what is that reality, because then that takes away the anxiety, particularly from the business community, but also from the consumer.

You're going to have people out there—I'll call them zealots—who really want to push this and say, "Hey, that one's out of date," and it's a day later. Well, that company can't respond if it's across Canada with a product. So there needs to be common sense built in to ensure the focus doesn't become the inspection and the enforcement as opposed to the intended consequence of better and healthier people.

I'm going to wrap this little portion of schedule 1 up. The Ministry of Health says that it wants to copy Obamacare's calorie warnings. Again, right intent; I'm not certain that following Obama is always the right way. There are a lot of things going on with Obama right now that may not have worked out the way he started down the path for. I just think we always have to be cautious whenever I hear, "We're following an Obama idea." Let's follow the ideas that come from the people at the front of the lines here in Ontario, who actually have the ideas that can make our province the best it can be.

Restaurants are already doing their own menu labeling. In fact, as many as 60% have voluntarily brought in calorie stickers. That's a good thing. I just want to again make sure that where we're putting resources is the right place, and what the real end benefit is going to be.

US public health researchers are finding that the calorie sticker policy is changing consumer behaviour. Americans are actually consuming more calories than before; again, let's watch for unintended consequences. Let's learn from some of those examples when that's the case. If there are challenges that they've done, let's learn from them before we repeat that mistake and have to back up and make it a double challenge for all those people.

The American Journal of Public Health stated: "Posting calorie benchmarks had no direct impact, nor did it moderate the impact of calorie labels on food purchases." I'm sure there are some people who are going to say it's wonderful; there are some people who are going to say it's not so wonderful. Let's really take the thought process to the stakeholders, to all the people who are going to be impacted and ensure we know what we're doing before we go gung-ho.

I'll now change, if I can, to schedule 2, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The key summary of that is to ban the sale of flavoured and menthol tobacco in Ontario, hike maximum fines for offences to be the highest in Canada, and allow public health inspectors to seize illegal smokes.

Again, I'm doing the pros and cons. I always try, when I come to the House, to be balanced. I want to look at both sides of an issue, and then we'll make the informed choice. We need to respect and appreciate both sides. There will always be two sides to any issue, and certainly from my perspective and the PC caucus per-

spective, there's always the ability to learn from others, there's always an ability to seek input and truly listen, and there is no one who has a corner market on the smartest way to do things. Sometimes there is legislation brought in this way that implies that one party knows better: "We're going to tell you this, and you're going to agree with us, and we're just going to steamroll it."

I'm not going to get into the time allocation bills, but in a couple of those cases, that certainly seemed to be what was happening, that they bring in a bill—I mean, it's incredulous. The one was the transparency and accountability act, which says, "We want to be more open and accountable, but we're going to shut down and time-allocate debate on that bill." I'm not really certain how that works. You would hope that they would want to have the most open and accountable process in place; time-allocating it is certainly not there.

A pro, Mr. Speaker: There is clear, undeniable scientific proof that tobacco products cause cancer and other disease. As I said earlier, certainly my sister is a prime example. That vision, sadly, will never leave my head, and if there's anything in this world that I can do to prevent one person from having to go through what I saw her do, particularly that generation of pages in front of you, my nephews and nieces, my friends' children, anyone out there—it just is a place that you don't ever want to be, in a hospital room watching what I had to watch. That will never, ever leave my mind.

When there's legislation like this, certainly I think we all have our due diligence to support it. Yes, people can make their own choices, but I'll tell you, if they could witness what I witnessed, I'm not certain how anybody could go out and do that. And I say to my boys, I can't believe you would ever even think of going out and spending \$8 or \$10 or \$12 on a product that you know at some point is going to kill you. It baffles me, and that money that you would spend you could put into so many other good things for society, those things that could bring you personal enjoyment or help others. Donate that money to charity so that it's a better world for all. Again, a little message to the folks out there: If you are smoking, try to find a way to quit. To you young folks: Please never, ever even attempt it. That's why some of this legislation is in front of us today.

Marketing of any kind of tobacco or tobacco-related products to youth is shown to encourage youth to start this unhealthy habit, so it's one of the discussions that have been had, even with these e-cigarettes. You know, the same motion is parlayed. It's one of those things—I don't know if there's scientific proof that says it absolutely happens, but it's like anything. A role model is a role model, and if you're seeing that and it's acceptable, and they just connotate—because someone at a young age may not know whether it's a cigarette or an e-cigarette and any difference. They're just watching. And a lot of people start smoking because of peer pressure, that it's cool to do: "If everybody else is out there, if mom and dad are doing it, grandpa and grandma are doing it, then why wouldn't I be able to do it?" Again, I can see why we want to take this approach.

We certainly support efforts to prevent minors from purchasing tobacco and tobacco-related products, absolutely. I'm adamant: There should never be leniency. Anyone who is ever caught selling to a minor, to a youth, should have the most stringent enforcement and fines given to them, with no ability to ever appeal that. It's just one of those things. That is Bill Walker's personal belief, and I'll leave it at that.

Cons: Again, let's have the discussion, let's have the debate to ensure that where we can use science, which is the best way to do things and ensure that we know that it's fact we're talking about and not just emotion—these can definitely be very emotional topics that we're talking about, and we want to ensure that it's not a politically motivated decision or an emotional decision. We want to ensure, when it's about health care, that it's science-based and we're ensuring that that's fact that we're using.

I've heard from some people that they're challenging it, and it's a fair challenge: Where is the evidence on menthol tobacco? The best available scientific evidence currently does not show that menthol cigarettes are more harmful than non-menthol cigarettes. Again, let's make sure we have the jury out. Let's make sure we monitor it. Some would say it's precautionary, and that's kind of a buzzword that's getting used a lot these days, and certainly—as I alluded to earlier, I'm a health recreation practitioner by trade—I'm pretty much on the precautionary tale.

I think you also, again, cannot allow us to get into a nanny state if there isn't evidence that's showing it. If that's the case, then maybe what we should be doing is saying to the minister, let's have a two- or three-year phase-in period of when this is to ensure that it's not, because if we can't prove that it's actually producing some ills, then we have to at least give that side of the argument the ability to prove their side of it. For this exact reason, Brazil is the only country in the world to have implemented a ban on menthol cigarettes. So there's still lots of jury out; there's still lots of testing. It's one of those things again, sadly, that is there, and it would be great if we knew one way or the other.

1710

I think what my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk was trying to say this morning about the banning of neonics is that it is, again, a bit of a political—a bit knee-jerk. We're not sitting down and really actually waiting until the science is in and making sure, unequivocally, that science is moving in that direction. We're concerned about that. We want to make sure that any of these decisions, when it's relating to health care, are about facts, science, and that it's going to be in the best interests of all people.

The US Food and Drug Administration has studied this option, but determined that “menthol cigarettes did not increase the risk of disease compared with smoking” cigarettes not flavoured with menthol. While it banned flavoured cigarettes, it actually granted menthol an exemption under the law. Why did they do that? You would assume that a group like the US Food and Drug

Administration has gone through some pretty comprehensive testing, and if not, then that should be challenged by someone. But if some organization that is as renowned as that and has been around forever and puts all of the food products through the tests is saying that, then we, I think, owe due diligence to at least take a look at that and ensure that we know where we're going with it.

Europe, to my knowledge, plans to ban it by 2022. Again, they're obviously looking, saying, “We need to test these things, we need to look at them and we need to ensure that we have an ability to do that, to make sure. We're in uncharted territory for now, and we want to make sure.”

Here's what I do know: Menthol is an organic compound that is derived from the peppermint or corn mint plant or that can be created synthetically in a laboratory. It reduces the harshness of cigarette smoke due to its characteristic cooling effects on the mouth and throat. Public health officials have told us that the mint flavour additive entices people to smoke more and that it is especially popular among youth. To them, it's a starter product and contributes to their long-term addiction.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, if it's something like that, then we want to make sure we take action and we look at it. Anything that I think is going to induce or entice a youth to become a smoker of any state, then I am fully aware and prepared to stand up and help support legislation that would limit that or hopefully decrease it completely.

The market share is around 30%, and I'd like to hear input from the public on this specific schedule. Again, I don't know how much, before this bill was actually introduced, the public was ever allowed the opportunity to have a say. Did they go out and do any real testing? Did they do any surveys? Did they do any kind of opportunity? Is there a website that the public could have weighed in on this before they introduced the bill? I get the whole idea that you're introducing it, and maybe that's the strategy, and they'll have a 45-day period, but 45 days for something that's pretty significant may not be enough. Again, I would hope that the minister, if she's receiving a lot of feedback in that 45-day period, would be willing to actually extend that, to allow the ultimate number of people to weigh in on a discussion such as this.

For one reason, this could backfire. I worry that unreasonable demands will only drive people to the black market. In this case, it may drive smokers to cheap, illegal cigarettes, and that concerns me. Mr. Speaker, you're hearing, whether it be in this House, whether it be out in the media, whether it be out in your community, that there are illegal smoke shacks all over. The price can range from \$4 to \$8, is what I'm hearing, for 200 cigarettes, so we have to be cautious that again an expected outcome could result in an unintended consequence that we actually drive more people, both youth and adults, into smoking illegal cigarettes. If you can buy a bag of 200 for \$4 or \$8, as opposed to a package of cigarettes, which I trust is about \$24—I'm not really certain; I've

never been a smoker—for \$8 or \$10, that concerns me, because for a lot of people, money talks. They're going to go and buy it. If a young person has four or five friends around and they've got 200 cigarettes in a bag that they've paid \$8 for, they'll hand them out like candy. Speaker, that's not what we want to have happen.

The numbers show to me that Ontario has the worst contraband tobacco problem in Canada: One in three are illegal smokes. It's reasonable to expect that this ban may make this problem worse by driving sales to the illegal market, to a tune of 300 million more cigarettes underground every year. A larger contraband market just means better-funded gangs, more health care issues that we're going to have to deal with as taxpayers—and when I was in the briefing yesterday, it wasn't lost on me, when I asked the question about contraband, very quickly the senior bureaucrats in the room said, “This isn't really us. This is a finance issue.” I suggested to them that I get why technically that may be the case, because it is about taxation, but the general public thinks of smoking and illegal cigarettes as a health issue. What I encourage them to do is to work very collaboratively with finance to find a way to put some actual solid action in on this issue.

We have to look at this in a two-pronged thought process. One is, what is the cost of providing health care if more people—300 million more cigarettes are on the open market to our youth, to those who already smoke, and, more concerning, those youth and those who aren't already smoking who may pick up such a habit that is very, very, very difficult to stop.

We also have to look at it from the financial loss side of the equation. If there are that many illegal contraband cigarettes, then we're not getting the taxation revenue that we would through the regular process of buying cigarettes. I really don't want people to buy cigarettes, but it is, in fact, one of those realities, that there's a lot of money generated. We're missing out on a lot of revenue and what could that revenue be doing for our health care system, our schools—in my case, as critic of community and social services and long-term-care homes, what could that be doing for those people, truly the needy on the front lines, if we had that type of revenue?

I just want to really take a look. I was quite shocked, Minister, that there was nothing in there concrete about contraband. We need to see action from your government. This isn't a new problem.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's finance. It's a finance issue.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can keep flipping back to finance. What I would suggest to those members on the opposite side who are saying it's finance—I implore you, out of your civic responsibility, go to your finance minister and get him to take some concrete action tomorrow on contraband. It's something that's been there a long time. They've been in government for 11 years, Mr. Speaker. These illegal shacks didn't just pop up yesterday. It's not a new phenomenon, so why are they continually not taking action? When we bring something like this up, they point backwards to someone else's issue. Take some

accountability, take some responsibility. Do the right thing and ensure that the health of our children and our residents is the absolute priority of your government.

I'm going to move on now to schedule 3. I have a fair bit to cover on this. I have to say, of the three schedules—and with the minister in the House—this has been the most controversial. The other two were pretty easy sells for most people, to be able to get them outside and get to see where the thought process was. This one, schedule 3, is the Electronic Cigarette Acts, 2014. Again, the brief summary: to ban and restrict the sale, promotion and use of e-cigarettes the same way as tobacco.

Again, I'm going to follow a very similar process. I'm going to talk about pros and cons and try to just engage people's thought processes to ensure we're looking at this from a very balanced viewpoint. I have certainly heard from both sides of the issue.

The pros: It's easy to agree we need to limit the exposure of our young people to tobacco products. This is because it is easy to argue tobacco use costs us billions in health dollars. I can limit that just to youth, but as I've said throughout this whole statement today, everyone in society, whether you're a youth, whether you're a senior, whether you're middle-aged, anyone smoking, you are costing yourself and your family hardship in some way at the end of the day because there's a lot of money being spent to treat those people who have been lifelong smokers, regardless of whether it's a right and a privilege to do that or not. At the end of the day, we also have to have a conscience to say, what are my actions doing for my fellow man and woman? What am I doing that actually is taking and detracting away from their society?

But that's not really what this schedule is about. It's about curbing access to nicotine, a chemical derived from the tobacco plant, by banning and restricting access to electronic cigarettes the same way as tobacco cigarettes. Let's get something straight: An e-cigarette is not, at this point, a tobacco product. There's nothing that says it is. There's nothing from nicotine, that I'm made aware of, in those cartridges. It doesn't mean there couldn't be other people coming up with a pretty quick scheme to put those cartridges in, but we just want to clarify that at this current point it is not, to the best of my knowledge and the people who have done the research, a tobacco product.

E-cigarettes are products that deliver a nicotine-containing aerosol commonly called vapour. A colleague across the floor referenced a shop in his riding that actually has “vapour” right in the title of the storefront. This aerosol is created by heating a solution typically made up of propylene glycol or glycerol or glycerin. According to public health research, a puff of e-cigarette with the highest nicotine content contains 20% of the nicotine contained in the puff of a conventional cigarette. Again, it's a fifth, which is a good step in the right direction. The hope would be that there would be none, because we all know that nicotine is the thing that creates the issue down the road. It is, in fact, seen as a healthier alternative to tobacco smoking, useful for quitting smok-

ing and reducing cigarette consumption, and as a way to circumvent smoke-free laws by enabling users to smoke anywhere.

I've certainly had feedback. I don't know, Speaker, if you have or any of my colleagues in any of the three parties have heard that. I have received some emails and some phone calls saying, "What are you doing? This is the thing that's helping me to stop smoking. It's the one thing that I've actually tried that's working for me. What are you going to do banning that?" I want to make clear—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're not banning them.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We're not banning them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just allow me—work with me here.

However—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

1720

Mr. Bill Walker: However, in speaking with the minister's staff yesterday, I was made aware that they're not banning it. So easy, people. Relax over there.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm skinnier. That's right.

So what it will do at some point is, you cannot smoke e-cigarettes anywhere you can't smoke conventional cigarettes.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: What's wrong with that?

Mr. Bill Walker: I didn't say there was anything wrong. I'm doing the pros and cons. Relax over there. It's my hour, not yours.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: At least we're paying attention to you.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm glad to see that, actually. Thank you, Minister. Thank you.

I think the concern is, people who don't want to see this typically saw the original smoking ban, where you couldn't smoke in certain places, like your car; you couldn't smoke in public restaurants; you couldn't then smoke on places like patios—those members of the community who had patios were originally told, "If you build a patio, you can have your patrons go out there and smoke." Then you came along and said, "No, no, no, you're not even going to be allowed to smoke on those." They're saying, "Well, I just spent \$20,000" or whatever the number was. These people very quickly go to that thought process, that you're going to go to an immediate ban.

I think, again, Minister, obviously there needs to be some promotion put out. People are jumping very quickly. Don't shoot the messenger here; I'm just telling you. What I do is my job; I listen to my constituents, who come to me and say, "Why are you doing this? Why are you banning them?" So I'm clarifying wherever I can, but I think there's work to be done, obviously—because they're already coming to me with that—to let people know that it is not a ban at this point.

Of course, their second question is, "Well, then it's only a matter of time. Once they get this one through the door, they'll ban everywhere, anywhere smoking." I'll

leave that up to the judgment of each you whether that's right or wrong. I certainly have my own views.

But it is something that I think we have to give some thought to, because for those people who are, I think we need to make sure we understand that it's something that is a useful tool. For those people, there is some validity. If that's going to help them get off smoking, period, we need to not totally shut it down, because that might be the only thing that actually stops them from becoming a long-term smoker.

They're promoted under the claims that they are healthier, cheaper and cleaner than cigarettes, as they do not produce second-hand smoke, can be smoked anywhere and are sexier than nicotine replacement therapy. That is not my word, Mr. Speaker; that was in the note that obviously was prepared for my benefit. I will not be trying to get sexier by having an e-cigarette. I can assure all of you that I need a lot more help than an e-cigarette to get me anywhere.

No comment required on that one, by the way. I just wanted to see if you're still listening.

To my knowledge, the makers of e-cigarettes are amenable to the idea that this product should not be sold to people under 19 years of age. I think that's unequivocal. I don't think anyone is going to argue that. I hope the youth in our crowd today and those listening at home—there can be no tolerance whatsoever for anything that is going to even minimally entice a young person to try smoking.

I want to share a little personal story on this. I'm actually quite a bit younger than most of my siblings. I started with five siblings, and I've sadly shared with you that I lost one. But all five of my siblings, with the exception of my oldest sister, were smokers. My two older brothers, when I was about six years old—I don't know why they did this, but they decided they were going to give me a cigarette. I took a couple of puffs and was immediately ill. They thought that was a real giggle with all their friends around. About two, three or five minutes later, they decided to give me a cigar. I had a couple of puffs and I got even more green than these chairs that we comfortably reside in every day. They had their giggle and blah, blah, blah. About two minutes later, they gave me a pipe, and I did it.

I have to say, as it was the meanest, cruelest thing that my brothers ever did to me, or at least up there in the numbers, it was extremely effective; because the only other time in my life I have ever tried to even think about a cigarette or a cigar was when my best friend, Don Richardson, and his wife, Susie, had my godchild, Robin. Of course, back in that day, it was still pretty customary that people would have cigars. They were just those little wine-tipped cigarillo cigars. I again thought, "Well, I'm going to do this in honour of my buddy and my new goddaughter." I took my two puffs and got violently ill. That's the extent of my smoking career.

When I had my two boys, Zach and Ben, I really laboured with, would I be as mean as my brothers? Because it was pretty effective, and I have never been a

smoker nor will I ever be a smoker, but I don't know that I could be mean enough to do it to them. Sometimes I wonder if I maybe should have, because I think they are still part of that generation where there's a lot of enticement to become smokers.

It's why, in this situation here, we have to look at all different things. If an e-cigarette is going to be the thing that actually at some point promotes them to become a smoker, then I'm not going to want to support that very strongly.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Did you inhale?

Mr. Bill Walker: Not a whole lot, I've got to tell you, and I still got sick. So I can't imagine doing the inhaling of anything, and I certainly haven't inhaled—where you're going there, opposite member—with anything illegal. Let's put it that way—ever. I may be the only person of my age to ever be able to say that. On a stack of Bibles I swear, and that is the God's honest truth.

The cons: I fear about the stigma this specific schedule creates around people who are genuinely using this tobacco-free product to fight a tobacco addiction. I know senior citizens, many of them Legion members, who have come to me—and they were very vocal the last time around when there was a ban on smoking. They fought for this country, the liberty and rights and freedoms we enjoy. A lot of those people—again, I go to Remembrance Day services in a lot of the schools, and what really captivates me is that in most of those little clips, probably 90% of the soldiers, men and women of service, are actually smoking. In a lot of the old movies from back in that day they are smoking. I think we have to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was in some of those movies.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Yakabuski, you couldn't have been. You're too young.

We have to, again, give some thought to those Legion members who will attest to its efficacy. Why should we deny them the little pleasure of an e-cigarette, particularly when it isn't proven that there are any harmful health effects? To the minister and to those who will be reviewing all of the comments, that's something we have to take into consideration. Is there an exemption available for those people if we can't prove that it's actually a harmful carcinogen?

The Liberal government has made people who like plastic bags, junk food and who like the pleasure of e-cigarettes social pariahs. Again, we sometimes use a label, a 30-second sound bite, to try to get people who never read the rest of the article to just say, "Oh, this is wonderful. We have to jump on it," without reading the detail and understanding that there may be some unintended consequences. There may be some things inadvertently that are going to deprive people of something they actually have the right to do. If it's not impacting their health or someone's health around them, then I think we have to look at that.

That leads me to this nanny state mentality. Again, I'm trying to stay out of the weeds in regard to partisanship today, but there are a lot of things that have been enacted by a Liberal government in the recent past that

say, "We know better than you. You shall or you shall not do this." I think that's what really raised the ire of a lot of people who have been giving me feedback: "I should be able to make my own choices. I should be able to do this. I should be able to do that." To a degree, I share a lot of those same concerns. When it's in the case of cigarettes, if you're doing it in the proximity of someone else where you could actually impact their health, I'm different from that. I do think we have to actually—because people may choose to do it, but they have to have respect for those people around them.

The challenge with these is that there is no science to truly suggest that this is a health issue. I think until we do that, we've got to really tread cautiously on this.

The nanny state mentality doesn't imply to injection sites or the fact that nicotine replacement products are currently subsidized by the government. Most importantly, I question why the province would rush this through at the same time it is calling on the federal government to launch a Health Canada study into e-cigs.

I'm going to just share another example to try to exemplify this. It's a little bit like wind turbines. The government came out and decreed, "We're going to put these things up. They're going to save the world. They're going to create 300,000 jobs." I don't even think the 40,000 that they use now as their number is anywhere accurate. They came in and said, "You will." They took away the democratic right of municipalities, those closest to the people, elected in a municipality, to have a say whether they want those. And yet, there aren't studies out there that unequivocally prove there's no harm done to people in Ontario, to our great province. In this case, they're saying, "Sorry about your luck. We're just going to do it because we think it's going to happen." In that case, they came out and did exactly the opposite and said, "Too bad. We don't really care whether there's a study."

Again, we're seeing the same thing. Why would they not have learned from that? It's created a lot of acrimony across our province. This could do the same thing. Why would they have not waited, at least for this portion? The first two schedules—certainly, go ahead, but they could have left this off until they had the study from Health Canada.

I'm just going to reference at this point, Mr. Speaker—this is the Standing Committee on Health of the House of Commons. Mr. Ben Lobb, a good colleague from Huron-Bruce and the Conservative Party, is Chair of this committee. I'm just going to take a few extra excerpts out of here. Mr. Milan Khara, clinical director of the Vancouver General Hospital smoking cessation clinic, was the speaker in this case. I'm just going to quote:

"I am a physician, I work at Vancouver General Hospital, and I spend my clinical time in the smoking cessation clinic. Essentially, I eyeball people who want to quit smoking and help them in their quit journey using evidence-based treatment.

"I'm here to speak about electronic cigarettes. The first thing I'd like to do is just preface any comments I

have by saying that clearly this is a highly contentious area, with great polarization and dispute among people within the public health community and people within the tobacco control community. The areas of contention really span the whole issue, but they probably focus on a couple of main areas. The first is whether these products are safe, or indeed safer than traditional cigarettes. The second is whether these products have utility as a cessation device. Do these products actually help people to quit smoking? Third, there is some dispute over the harm that may or may not be caused to those who are secondarily exposed to vapour. There is also some concern around youth uptake and so-called renormalization of smoking behaviour ...

1730

“In addition to the unknown effects on health, we have concerns over the normalization of smoking. In a survey of youth, in 2012, researchers found that about one in five respondents between the ages of 16 and 30 had used an e-cigarette, and four out of five of the respondents who smoked felt that e-cigarettes would allow them to smoke in places where it is not allowed, such as the workplace. This has the potential to increase a person’s nicotine consumption.

“It’s well known that most adult smokers began smoking before the age of 18; relatively few people will start smoking and become regular smokers after this age. Increasing the attractiveness of vaping increases the risk of more Canadians becoming regular smokers. This is a serious threat to the tremendous progress that’s been made in Canada in reducing the number of smokers.

“Part of our 2001 position statement outlines the importance of preventing people from starting to smoke. We see the availability of e-cigarettes as a threat to the prevention of smoking initiation by normalizing smoking and presenting it as a safe way to deliver nicotine.

“There is no clear answer as to whether e-cigarettes help people quit smoking. We need further research into what role e-cigarettes play in smoking cessation, if any.

“E-cigarette products are currently not regulated and are not required to meet Health Canada standards for pharmaceutical products or natural health products. Until we know more about their safety and effectiveness, and until such time as they are available as regulated health products, we do not think pharmacists and other health care professionals should support their use.

“As part of its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the World Health Organization published a report on electronic nicotine delivery systems last summer. They provide advice for countries looking to deal with e-cigarettes. There are a number of points made in the report that this committee should seriously consider for implementation in Canada.

“They include, first, prohibiting e-cigarette manufacturers from selling and promoting e-cigarettes as a way to quit smoking. E-cigarette manufacturers should be required to comply with the same stringent criteria as other manufacturers of smoking cessation aids before being allowed to make such claims.

“Second, we should treat e-cigarettes the same as cigarettes in terms of bans on their use in public spaces. This will help send the message that public use of any form of nicotine-containing cigarettes is not acceptable.

“Third, do not allow sponsorship, advertising, or promotion of e-cigarettes, in the same way that this is not allowed for tobacco products.

“Last, restrict the sale of e-cigarettes in the same way as tobacco, to prevent uptake by minors.”

Again, I’m just going to recap. Here’s yet another time that the government—you know, the federal government is actually doing a study that might be conclusive and might be able to share with us whether, “Yes, it’s a good thing,” or, “No, it’s not; it should be restricted,” but they’re rushing this to market ahead of that. I’m sure we’ll turn around at some point and blame the federal government because they haven’t done it quickly enough. But we could certainly ensure that that would happen.

The cons—again, this is feedback I received. This isn’t just Bill Walker dreaming these things up; it’s actual feedback that I received. I fear about the stigma the specific schedule creates around people who are genuinely using this tobacco-free product to fight a tobacco addiction. So there is some validity.

I know of senior citizens, as I said earlier, many Legion members who will attest that they need and want this, and, “Until you can prove there is something doing damage to me,” they want it. So we have to be very cautious.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Your member is really trying hard over here. Thanks.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to read now, again—this is information that I’ve received back from constituents. I received this Monday, December 1:

“Hello,

“We were just in Ottawa this week as a witness for HESA meeting No. 43 on e-cigarettes, now the Premier of Ontario and others are pushing for Bill 45 schedule 3 immediately that takes away our freedom as vapers and vendors in Canada.

“This is absolutely draconian”—I’m quoting all of this—“and wrong and we need everyone’s help. Vaping has not only saved me from a premature death from cigarettes but also so many other Canadians. I smoked for 13 years, tried everything and was unable to stop a pack a day, felt terrible with constant breathing issues and coughing.

“I have been smoke free for two years now with vaping. I feel like a triathlete and can run for hours with no difficulty breathing, wheezing or coughing. I feel like I am 13 again when I played hockey.

“Vaping works, and we need your help in opposing this radical bill that is going to destroy the biggest health innovation in Canada in the last 50 years, and will force myself and other Canadians back to tobacco cigarettes. We need to act now as they are going in for a second reading on December 1, tomorrow. Please help and bring

this information to the public. We must say no to Bill 45. Thank you to your time and consideration.

“Regards,
“Shawn Wells.”

Another letter, dated November 30:

“Thank you for taking a moment from your busy schedule to read my correspondence. I am a member of the Canadian Nurses Association. I have an ethical responsibility to facilitate informed decision-making by presenting credible evidence. I take my code of ethics very seriously and as a result, I am writing to you.

“I came across vaporizers (electronic cigarettes) about a year and a half ago. Since that time, I have researched the science on this technology and, as result of that research, I am of the opinion that vaping is the most revolutionary treatment for the tobacco epidemic plaguing our country. As a nurse, the monetary cost of smoking to the taxpayer (\$20 billion per year) is insignificant compared to the years of suffering incurred from smoking-related diseases. It not only causes suffering for the smoker but their loved ones as well. It is a horrible thing to watch your mother, over months, slowly drowning in her own lung tissue. Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the world today. It kills over 37,000 Canadians every year, and for every death, 20 suffer from smoking-related diseases such as heart disease, COPD and cancer.

“My concern is that Bill 45 is being pushed through the law-making process very quickly without allowing the voices of Canadians to be heard and without the science on vaping being considered. Smoking is a very serious population health hazard and the people of this country deserve to have all treatments for this epidemic thoroughly and comprehensively investigated.

“Respectfully,

“Kellie Forbes, BScN, RN.”

Mr. Speaker, there are two very direct—from the people that we represent. My job is to bring those thought processes. I’ve tried today to bring a number of different thought processes forward to allow the people listening at home and in the House to look at them. There are definitely two sides, particularly when it comes to e-cigarettes.

I just want to review a couple of key messages. There is no clear answer as to whether e-cigarettes help people quit smoking; again, some people think there is, some people think there isn’t. We need to see further research.

Like I said earlier, I think the research has to speak for itself. This could have been one of those ones that, because we can’t define it, could have been left off the bill. The other two would have sailed through quickly and we could get those through the process already. We could have done more input. We could have made sure people had a true say on this.

Again, there is the health study from Health Canada to research whether it truly is going to be something that’s going to be a detriment to our health. We want to see the results of the federal study into e-cigarettes. Again, the minister could have left this off and said, “We’ll wait.

We’ll see what that study says, and then I could introduce another bill at that time.”

Those people listening at home can certainly feed that back in through the minister’s office, through our offices, to ensure that we are actually listening to the people we represent.

As I’ve said in here unequivocally on a number of cases today, Mr. Speaker, we need to be basing our thoughts on science: the findings in that study into e-cigarette safety, efficacy for harm reduction and cessation, and total impact on public health.

I’m going to just readdress the idea this morning that my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, with the neonics—there are a lot of different thought processes out there on whether neonics are truly killing bees or not killing bees. I have some people in my riding who are members of the Ontario Beekeepers’ Association but don’t fully believe that an absolute, outright ban is the way to go. In fact, they’ve splintered off and started their own bee association because they don’t believe that it’s that scientific and absolute. I’ve had farmers come and say, “I moved mine down the road 15 miles, and now I don’t have any of the same issues. So is it or isn’t it related to the neonics?” I’ve had some people saying that there are various places in Canada—that some are blaming it on neonics, but there’s no science saying it truly is. We have to be very cautious.

Obviously, we know that bees are pollinators and that they certainly play a key role in all of our food supply. But we also have to be very cautious with those groups and organizations out there that are certainly trying to work within the system and find innovative solutions without wiping it out—because I’m told, before the neonics came in, there were much more harmful pesticides and insecticides being used, and we certainly don’t want to go back there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On a point of order, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to compliment the member for staying on track and speaking to the bill, but I think he has wandered off a little bit. Maybe he could just come back and speak towards the bill at hand. I don’t think neonicotinoids, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I haven’t detected that myself, but I’ll certainly keep an eye on it. Thanks so much.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I’m really trying to do is draw a parallel: that you need to use science. Both of the issues that I’m talking about are about health care. It’s about the health of our citizens. That’s why we’re here. It’s our absolute fundamental priority for all of us in this room. I just want to make sure that what we’re doing at all times is using science as our guideline. We’re not allowing politics into play. We’re not allowing partisan thought processes into play. We’re not allowing emotion to interfere. In these cases, we have to rely on the science before we make a

decision that may actually be a wrong decision that we have to retract at some point down the road.

1740

In my opening comments I talked about the need for us to really listen to people to ensure that we're doing the right things. I shared with you that there were three different components of this bill, and I'm just going to review a little bit of that again.

The menu labelling, I think, generally, is something that most people can support, they can understand. If they look at a label—what's your riding again, Mr. Nicholls?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Bill Walker: The member for Chatham—Kent—Essex, I think, referred to going into a restaurant and looking in the mirror, but I think he meant at the label, and I think that certainly made an impact on him. He made a healthier choice and I'm glad of it, because I want him to serve in this House with me for a long time, as I do the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry—quite a mouthful—and the member from Nipissing—Pembroke.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Pembroke—Renfrew? He should know that, because he seems to talk with the Speaker almost daily and his riding does come up. Do you need another opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to talk to him?

I want to ensure that we're doing things about health care with science, that we're making decisions that are going to benefit all of us.

Again, I wanted to see some things in there more specifically about physical activity. I wanted to see concrete action on child obesity because I believe that's really where we need to focus. We need to ensure that we're not allowing kids to get into bad habits and eating unhealthy products, becoming obese and then spending inordinate amounts of money to try to bring them back to become healthy citizens.

What we need to do is be proactive and preventative. We need to ensure that kids are getting physical education every day. We need to make sure that they have physical activity every day, and that was one that you had absolutely no concern about me supporting, Minister, because I think it's there for all people if we just want to step into that one. And we definitely have to do more concrete things—a step in the right direction last week, as I mentioned, by the Premier to introduce it, but let's take it all the way up the ladder. Let's do things.

I would even go as far as looking at things that are going to entice people to become even more active, whether it's a tax credit for people to be able to take a program and get involved—we do it for minor sports, but can we extend that across the spectrum to all ages so that people are actually wanting to stay more active?

We also want to make sure that at the end of the day, we have healthy choices that are there, absolutely; how would anybody argue with that? But we want to make sure that there's clearness for the business community. We want to ensure that we're not putting added burdens. We continually in this House talk every day about the

750,000 people who are unemployed and the rising cost of electricity that is certainly impacting the ability for businesses to stay. We talk about the red tape. We talk about the bureaucracy. We talk about the waste of eHealth, the gas plants, all of those scandals. We could be putting in—businesses could be thriving.

This is one that I don't want to become yet another added burden, that they're going to inadvertently put more people out of work, which puts more strain on the system and fewer taxes to be able to spend on things like health promotion, like our health care, like proper eating choices.

Again, it's a worthy step in the right direction. Promoting healthy choices is a good thing, but I think we could have gone a lot further and I'm going to continue, as one of the critics in the room, to push the minister to ensure that we're looking at things that are going to truly have a huge impact in the end. This is a step. This is a good thing. Again, there's not much we can say too bad about it, but let's make sure we don't put any added burden on those businesspeople who are already struggling out there.

To move back, just a little bit of a review in case some people have joined us late. I just want to make sure that no one goes home without the benefit of hearing what I think are the good parts of this bill or the bad parts.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act—

Ms. Cindy Forster: You're doing a great job, Bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: I think they're asking for more time, Mr. Speaker. I may use part of my time to ask for unanimous consent to go for another half hour or so. I think I can get it all covered by then.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you're going on, I'm staying.

Mr. Bill Walker: I knew you would.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the banning of the sale of flavoured and menthol tobacco in Ontario: Again, what I want to really reiterate here is that I was really hoping—I think this minister truly wants to make a difference and wants to really tackle the root of the biggest challenges out there. I've already said the physical activity and the obesity; we could have had more concrete things through the use of physical activity.

This one is really right up there as well: We have the worst contraband tobacco problem in Canada. One in three are illegal smokes. I'm fearful that inadvertently some of this legislation may drive people to those illegal smoke shacks. They've had 11 years. They're not new. It's not a new issue. It's getting worse because there's more. I think the number I quoted earlier—this could actually result in 300 million more cigarettes out in the market for our youth and our smokers and for those who may not even be smoking, God forbid, to start, because we're driving it to that underground market. We don't get any revenue out of it.

Again, you can slough this off to the finance minister. I implore you to work with him, push him to put some legislation on this table immediately to address this—not smoke and mirrors, pardon the pun, but we need

something that's concrete. We need to ensure there's something there that's actually going to have an impact and ensure that we are truly getting to the root of these challenges that are out there.

With regard to schedule 3, the Electronic Cigarettes Act, as I say, I think there are some people who are going to think it's great, from the cessation side of things. We haven't proven that it truly is a health impact at this point. We could have waited until the federal government did their study and then not wasted time going back and forth or to and fro. We could have said, "Here's the science."

We need to ensure that we have the science, like I said earlier. I used as an example, just to draw people's attention to it, the neonics: They did not use science. They didn't wait for the scientific proof. And what's going to happen? What are the inadvertent consequences, the unintended consequences that we may feel as a result of that?

Mr. Speaker, I will commend the minister, a new minister, in fact, for bringing this piece of legislation. I would have preferred that she used schedules 1 and 2, which I think everyone in this House could have supported. We would have had it through. It would have been enacted and would have actually started to make a difference for people tomorrow. I'm not certain the e-cigarette was one that we really had to combine with that. They're doing a lot of these types of bills, where they're bundling a bunch of things. I'm hopeful that wasn't for political reasons or to try to wedge anyone in this room to say, "I won't vote for it," and then use that for partisan political reasons.

I want this to be about people's health. I particularly want it to be about our youth and the future of our province. I want to ensure that we're always doing things in a balanced, methodical manner that ensures that the health of Ontarians is our absolute priority.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, I was hoping for 20 minutes on this bill, but I'm only going to get two.

If the member from Nickel Belt were here to do her lead, I think she would zone in on what this bill doesn't have. It doesn't have sodium labelling, a very important thing in health issues in this province. I wonder why the government is not legislating sodium labelling. We have 10,000 people in this province on dialysis and probably hundreds of thousands who are being monitored for the possibility of needing to go on dialysis. We all know that sodium intake increases blood pressure, and increases in blood pressure lead to kidney disease, which leads to people having to go on dialysis. So I think the government should reconsider that, and I know we'll be putting forth amendments.

It also impacts my critic portfolio. We have hundreds of thousands of people using food banks here in the province of Ontario, living on processed and canned foods. The Canadian Medical Association says that one of the ways to reduce heart attacks, strokes, high blood

pressure and eventually kidney disease is for people to have fresh fruits and vegetables, which doesn't happen for the hundreds of thousands of people who are on social assistance, ODSP, and the working poor in this province.

I would implore the government to revisit the issue of sodium labelling in restaurants and anywhere else where labelling will occur under this legislation.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Long-term care and wellness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't know how I can make it without you. Thanks so much.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to commend the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his very thoughtful and well-researched comments. I can see you've put in a lot of effort to study the issue, and I really, really appreciate the feedback.

I also want to thank the member from Welland for her comments.

I only have two minutes to respond to a half-an-hour piece. I'm going to zone in on two things. One is, I repeatedly heard, "Why don't you wait for the federal government?" My point is, if we were waiting for the federal government, we'd still be smoking cigarettes inside this Legislature. There's a role for the province, and we've always shown leadership, so we've moved on it.

The second thing: I want to tell your constituents who keep saying, "Well, vaping is helping me get off smoking," that there is absolutely nothing in our legislation that stops people from continuing to move from their cigarettes to their electronic cigarettes if they so wish, and that is really critical. That's why we say it's balance. It continues to be legal in Ontario for adults to vape. All we're saying is, let's keep the kids away. If we had known everything we know about cigarettes today, wouldn't we wish that we had had a smoke-free Ontario 30 years ago? It probably would have saved your mom's ill health that you reference, as well as perhaps your sister's life.

All we are saying is, we're managing that risk. We don't know how good or bad these electronic cigarettes are, so let's keep the non-vapors away from it. That's what this is based on. It's about negotiating different risks, and that's how we landed on this. I hope that gives you some comfort, and again, I thank everybody in the Legislature for this robust debate.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to stand in this Legislature.

To my counterpart from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, he went on for an hour, but he only did that because he wanted to get his word count up. But, in all seriousness—we do have fun on this side, as I'm sure the others have fun at others' expense on the other side.

However, on a more serious note, I talked earlier about the importance of calorie counts, and I recall—I

mentioned this earlier—how in fact I went to one of those fast-food restaurants at a point in time where I was watching my weight and wanting to improve my own personal health. I read through, and they had the calories of everything listed. I was surprised, as the minister had once mentioned earlier in her leadoff, how certain food items, even drinks, contain such high calories. It really caused me to sit up and take notice and forced me to change my mind on several different items that I was going to have. I don't think there are many calories in a black coffee, and that's what I ended up getting that time.

But we look at the health of our young people today, and I'm very concerned about it. I really think there are a number of things that we can do. Parents can do the best they can in terms of leading by example with regard to proper food selection for their children. Teachers in schools can do their best as well, and we can maybe try to legislate—of course, then kids, even though they can't get it in a cafeteria, will suddenly stop going to the cafeteria and go down the street where they can get that quick burger.

I think, too, that physical activity is critical, and I really think that perhaps the government, in their wisdom, should look at putting back into the school curriculum four credits so that students can become more physically active and therefore reduce obesity as well.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise in this House, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I want to congratulate the member on a speech that really talked about the personal experiences that he brings to this portfolio and also this issue—this issue of creating a smoke-free province where cancer deaths are reduced.

The member had the personal experience of seeing family members close to him go through that horrible cancer journey, and this is one very specific thing that we can do, as the government of Ontario, to help reduce those experiences, to help prevent other families from going through those same tragedies.

I do want to quote from the Toronto Star just a couple of weeks ago. They wrote, "The Liberal bill is inspired by NDP MPP France Gélinas, who has been pushing for a ban on flavoured tobacco since 2008." It's taken some time to reach this point where we are now all talking and seeming to agree about the importance of moving forward on that ban to prevent young people from taking up the habit of smoking and to prevent those future cancer deaths.

But as my colleague the member for Welland pointed out, there's still a lot more we need to do. The calorie labelling provisions that are included in this bill do not include sodium content, which, as we know, is a major

contributor to high blood pressure and eventual stroke and heart attack. That needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You sure you don't want to give me that extra 10, eh?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank my colleague from Welland, who's a nurse. She certainly makes a good point with regard to sodium. I would remind people that starches and sugars are equally as bad, so try to cut those out of your diet and we'll all be better off.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and the calorie counts: I want to just encourage you to continue to look in the mirror and keep up the good fight.

The minister from long-term care and wellness, I want you to know, as your critic, the only reason—and my other critic, as well: I only do that to try to make you better, more effective. More importantly, the people of Ontario will be the beneficiary of me being a good, objective critic and holding you to the best game that you can bring to the table.

I just can't go past—you made a comment in regard to the federal government and we could have been waiting. I'd like you to watch the federal government on balancing the budget before you bankrupt our province, so there's a trade-off.

Hon. Liz Sandals: You were doing so well.

Mr. Bill Walker: I've got to keep you honest. I don't want you to get too comfortable over there.

The member from London West: Thank you very much. It is very much a personal thing—not only the side of losing my sister and the ills of my mom and my other sister. I don't want to see anybody go through that, if we can prevent it, and it is preventable. Just do the right thing when it comes to smoking; just say no.

To you young folks, the pages that we've had the privilege to serve with for the last number of weeks, to those looking at home and to those parents and grandparents: Do everything in your power you can to get people to not smoke—please just say no every single time. Tell your friends, if they think about it: "Just say no; make the right decision." To the adults out there: If you do smoke today, do whatever you can to stop doing that. It's in your best interests; it's in the best interests of the other people around.

I want to just, as my recreation guide that never leaves me, say this: Do 30 minutes of physical activity every day, eat healthy, make the proper choices, get proper sleep, and at the end of the day, you'll be helping yourself and everyone around you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Continued from back cover

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation

Motion agreed to 1738

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Debi Johnson

Mrs. Julia Munro 1738

Ron Cherney

Mr. Wayne Gates 1739

Christmas Caravan

Mr. Yvan Baker 1739

Christmas season

Mr. Rick Nicholls 1739

Boris Natyshak

Mr. Taras Natyshak 1740

Cumberland village

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde 1740

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Jack MacLaren 1740

Abdirizak Warsame and Paul Howard

Mr. John Fraser 1740

Kingston Interval House

Ms. Sophie Kiwala 1741

Sign-language interpretation

Hon. James J. Bradley 1741

Motion agreed to 1741

Visitors

Mr. Bill Walker 1741

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac) 1741

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Protecting Passenger Safety Act, 2014, Bill 53,

Mr. Fraser / Loi de 2014 sur la protection de la
sécurité des passagers, projet de loi 53, M. Fraser

First reading agreed to 1742

Mr. John Fraser 1742

Right to Care Act (Children 16 Years of Age and Older), 2014, Bill 54, Mr. McDonell / Loi de 2014 sur le droit aux soins en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus, projet de loi 54, M. McDonell

First reading agreed to 1742

Mr. Jim McDonell 1742

Ottawa School Day Nursery Inc. Act, 2014, Bill Pr14, Mr. Fraser

First reading agreed to 1742

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Michaëlle Jean

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur 1742

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Brad Duguid 1743

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Helena Jaczek 1744

Michaëlle Jean

Mr. Taras Natyshak 1745

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Percy Hatfield 1745

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Ted Arnott 1745

Michaëlle Jean

Mme Gila Martow 1746

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Wind turbines

Mr. Bill Walker 1746

Employment standards

Ms. Peggy Sattler 1746

Legal aid

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 1747

Hospice funding

Mr. Jim Wilson 1747

Mining industry

Mr. Victor Fedeli 1747

Cemeteries

Ms. Sophie Kiwala 1747

Wanstead Transmission Station

Mr. Robert Bailey 1747

French-language education

Mrs. Cristina Martins 1748

Hospital funding

Mr. Jim McDonell 1748

Social assistance

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 1748

York region chair

Ms. Ann Hoggarth 1749

Hydro rates

Mr. Rick Nicholls 1749

Hispanic Heritage Month

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 1749

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014, Bill 35, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des tribunaux, des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires, projet de loi 35, M. Naqvi

Second reading vote deferred 1750

Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, Bill 45, Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2014 pour des choix plus sains, projet de loi 45, Mme Damerla

Hon. Dipika Damerla..... 1750

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris..... 1752

Mr. John Fraser..... 1753

Mr. Rick Nicholls 1754

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong..... 1754

Mr. Arthur Potts..... 1755

Mr. Jim McDonell 1755

Hon. Dipika Damerla..... 1755

Mr. Bill Walker..... 1756

Ms. Cindy Forster 1767

Hon. Dipika Damerla..... 1767

Mr. Rick Nicholls 1767

Ms. Peggy Sattler..... 1768

Mr. Bill Walker..... 1768

Second reading debate deemed adjourned..... 1768

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 3 December 2014 / Mercredi 3 décembre 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2014, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2014 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal	
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	1717
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	1718
Mr. Steve Clark.....	1720
Mr. John Vanthof.....	1720
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1720
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	1721
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	1721
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	1721
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1726

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	1726
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	1727
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	1727
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	1727
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1727
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	1727
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1727
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	1727
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	1727
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	1727
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	1727
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn.....	1727
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	1727
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	1727
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	1727

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	1727
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1727

Taxation

Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	1728
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	1728

Government services

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1729
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1729

Government services

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1730
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1730

Social Assistance Management System

Mr. Bill Walker.....	1731
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	1731

Social Assistance Management System

Ms. Cindy Forster.....	1731
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	1731

Forest industry

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1732
Hon. Bill Mauro.....	1732

Ontario Place

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	1732
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	1732

Environmental assessment

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1733
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1733
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	1733

Accessibility for the disabled

Ms. Soo Wong.....	1733
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	1733
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	1734

Beekeeping industry

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	1734
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1734
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	1735

Domestic violence

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	1735
Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	1735

Mental health and addictions strategy

Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	1736
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	1736
Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	1736

Highway construction

Mr. John Yakabuski.....	1736
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	1737

Post-secondary education

Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	1737
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	1737
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	1737

Wind turbines

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	1738
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	1738

Continued on inside back cover