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Tuesday 14 April 2015

Mardi 14 avril 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION
PLANS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES
DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 1, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue the member for Scarborough Southwest had the floor. The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'll pick up where I was speaking last time. I just wanted to remind the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. Both the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt will be speaking shortly after me.

We are discussing Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I think the key to this bill, which I was talking about last time, is that it provides another tool for people to save money for a pension plan. As we all know, not even 50% of the people in Ontario have pensions or save for pensions. I think we as a government have an obligation to encourage people to put aside money for when they retire.

In my riding there are many people who come to see me—older people—and say, “I don't have much money to retire.” They are in their sixties looking for jobs. It's not a very pleasant situation to be in.

When someone's younger they think, “I'll contribute later,” but you have to start as early as possible. And when you start reaching my age, you've got to realize that when you stop working you've got to have enough money to survive the rest of your life.

I think our government is committed to implementing a bold new strategy to enhance this province's retirement

income security. That's about all I want to say at this point. We do have other speakers on this matter and I could just pass it on to the other two members that I mentioned earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for the continuation of the debate.

I ask for the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 57 this morning, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. Of course, this is a commitment the government made through the fall economic statement. We followed through in terms of introducing legislation last December. It's an important piece of the puzzle in our efforts to enhance retirement income security for all Ontarians.

This is partly spawned by the federal government's unwillingness to enhance the CPP, which most Ontarians, indeed most Canadians, are dependent upon. For instance, in my riding of Ottawa South—and even in my own family, my father, who was on the Ontario Parole Board and the Federal Parole Board, did not actually have a pension, so he was dependent upon his RRSPs and the Canada Pension Plan. As he got older, he had to be very careful about spending his money. Many people in my riding of Ottawa South are dependent on the CPP.

It's incumbent upon us to provide a vehicle—which the PRPPs are—for small and medium-sized employers to be able to provide some security for their employees, and to have it work complementarily to the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan. We as legislators have to look 10, 15, 20 years down the road, to see where people are going to be at. I want to go back to the federal government, again, not enhancing the CPP, which I do believe is a mistake, is an abdication of responsibility. In the absence, or the vacuum, of taking on that responsibility of ensuring that Ontarians—indeed all Canadians—have access to a good, solid retirement plan, or some security, we have to take these measures.

I'm fully supportive of this legislation, Bill 57, and PRPPs. As I said, they are a tool: They are a tool to work complementarily to the ORPP, to provide some retirement income security for those people who need it, to provide employers a vehicle by which they can support their employee and, again, work complementarily to the ORPP.

As I said, I hope that we can get this legislation moving forward. I'll cede my time to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Ottawa South for continuation of debate.

We'll move over to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'm very pleased to be given the time this morning to support Bill 57, following my colleagues from Ottawa South and Scarborough Southwest.

There was a very important article written recently by Adam Mayers about the relationship between pensions and healthy communities. As most of you in the House know, as a former registered nurse, healthy communities are very important, not just to myself as a professional nurse, but also to every community here in Ontario.

The author clearly states that, "In the private sector, 76% of employees don't have a pension." In contrast, "In the public sector, 86% do." But the article is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. It looked at a study by the Boston Consulting Group. They were commissioned by four of Ontario's largest pension plans, looking at the relationship between pension plans and the health of the community. Now, there's a strong correlation, according to this article: that when you have a defined pension plan, the community is more healthy.

I'm going to share some of the data as part of my remarks this morning. According to Adam Mayers and the folks from Boston Consulting, "In 2012, Canadian defined benefit plans paid out \$72 billion to 3.5 million pensioners. Most of this money is spent where they live." Again, that's a good thing. They're not travelling all over the world; they're staying here in Ontario. I can't stress it enough. "In Ontario, 7% of all income in our towns and cities, or \$27 billion, is derived from defined benefit pensions." The article continues on to talk about how "Seniors with defined benefit plans are confident consumers because the predictable income stream allows them to better plan their" business.

0910

The article concludes by the following: "Make workplace pensions mandatory to force savings. The coming Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is an example," according to the author, of such a thing. Also, the author states, "Don't wait. Governments should do something now, whether enhancing the CPP or going another way." They also talk about sharing "the risk between the employees and employers, so that pensioners aren't left managing" their own affairs.

I heard, when we were debating Bill 57, the member from York-Simcoe speak eloquently in support of Bill 57.

I know my colleague earlier talked about the fact that the federal government is not working in partnership with Ontario, but I also wanted to say that we're not the first province to have PRPPs. Other provinces, like British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec, have all already passed legislation to have PRPPs. We're following other provinces.

An important message is that in the proposed legislation, in the explanatory note, it's clearly stated right at the beginning—it talks about how the purpose of this legislation is to provide a legal framework for the establishment of the administration of a type of pension plan that is accessible to both employees and those who are

self-employed. We note that this province has a lot of self-employed individuals, and they are mainly small businesses. As such, it is a good thing to have such a framework to support those individuals, to make sure they retire with a healthy, comfortable income.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation, if passed, will also set out rules for dealing with the funds of PRPP accounts for certain family law purposes, because often the family breaks down and a family will move across provinces. It's very important that we set out the rules to make sure everybody is aware at the time of the establishment of the plan.

The other piece about the proposed legislation is the fact that as a government we have been very clear to support seniors and their well-being as they retire. I have a very aging riding, Scarborough-Agincourt; a good proportion of my constituents are seniors.

More importantly, the fact is that the government, in their fall 2014 economic statement, confirmed our intention to introduce this legislation. And I believe most members of the House to date who have spoken on Bill 57 support the intent of this bill. I hope that we can have further dialogue as this bill gets discharged to a committee, to seek out more stakeholders to discuss this bill further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from the government side for their speeches on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, but I don't know who to thank. It's like speed debating over there. It's like, how many Liberals can actually speak in one 20-minute slot? It's like, they've got their legislation but they're not that sure about it, or they're not that proud of it. We're just trying to figure out what they want, because normally a member gets 20 minutes to speak on a piece of legislation. I know my colleague from Huron-Bruce is going to speak a little bit later, and I'll have the opportunity to help as well, fairly soon, to speak to this bill. But I'm just wondering what the MO of the Liberals is these days. It's like they're in and it's changing like it's musical debaters, just one after another?

Having said that, I'm going to have to say to them, you're going to have to pick a lane here. We're just after having debated and, through time allocation and the power of the tyranny of the majority, they pushed through, on second reading, Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—You know, that one where it's going to cost up to 18,000 jobs here in the province of Ontario for every \$2 billion that it takes out of the economy; the one where there is simply no demonstrated need for it but it's a good political move on the part of the government because they're trying to pretend that somehow, if we pass Bill 56, everybody's going to retire in luxury here in the province of Ontario, when the reality is that it's up to everybody to plan. We've been doing that in Ontario through our RRSP system, the federal system, for many years.

The fact that people are not putting enough money into their RRSPs is directly related to the fact that they

don't have enough after you people over there have taken it all from them. And you're going to do more with your cap-and-tax.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from—is it Renfrew—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nipissing–Pembroke.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Nipissing–Pembroke. He always adds a lively contribution to the debate, and I know we're all awake after listening to his comments.

But we know that the PRPP is not really the way to encourage people to save for a healthy retirement. We have RRSPs; there are those options out there. CPP is the right way; we need to enhance the CPP in order to actually effectively help people who are going to be in a retirement position to be able to afford the everyday costs of living: home, gas in their car, food in their belly.

So we agree with the Ontario retirement plan. That one is one that the NDP had proposed back in 2010, and we agree with that simply because there is buy-in both from the employer and the employee. That is what a retirement plan, really, in a fulsome way, should look like. It shouldn't be forced on an employee.

In this case, what's happening is that the employer goes out and purchases this program or product for retirement, and banks and insurance companies are going to charge an administration fee. That's not really going to help the employee. If the employee wants an RRSP, they can actually access that on an individual basis on their own. So I don't see how this is really going to help retirement at large for the citizens of Ontario, and I look forward to more debate. Maybe there's more information that will help us reconsider, but on the basis of this bill, I highly doubt that this is the answer to a retirement savings plan for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to add my voice to this, and my compliments to the members for Scarborough Southwest, Scarborough–Agincourt and Ottawa South for their comments earlier.

There is, I think, a general understanding of how important it is that we move forward with this legislation. As I think members know, there are five other provinces that have passed legislation to implement pooled retirement pension plans, those provinces being British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. I think it's also important to understand that, obviously, this will be something that will be adding to what is already in place related to the federal plan.

We've been speaking also about our Ontario Retirement Pension Plan over the last year or so, very capably led by my colleague Minister Hunter and, of course, strongly supported by the Minister of Finance. This is all part of a package that we recognize is about dealing with the reality of the fact that people are not in the circumstances that I think they want to be in, in terms of looking forward to retirement.

If I may, in passing, with the little amount of time that I have left: I was very grateful that Minister Hunter, as part of her consultations over the winter break, was in Thunder Bay. It was interesting actually listening to all the people that came forward. I think you could accurately describe it as people from all sides of the political spectrum. Certainly social activists, who obviously lead the charge in regard to advancing social causes, and union leadership, as well as the chambers of commerce all agreed, actually, that we need to find some way to move forward to advance this issue. So this is a piece of legislation that is important, and we are certainly hopeful that all parties in the House will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

I just want to pick up on something that my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned in his address. It's funny how this government operates the rules of debate. I've read the standing orders, but it's like they've cracked a code on how we can have as many people speak for the least amount of time, to be able to get a bill into committee. So I'd really like to have at least one of those members that spoke earlier talk about the government's plans to move this bill through committee and ultimately come back to the House for third reading. That's a request, through you, Speaker, to whoever is finishing the two minutes.

0920

I was in my riding last week, and I spoke at the Brockville Chamber of Commerce and had a great speech. I didn't get one question about Bill 57, but I had a lot of questions about the ORPP. In fact, I ended up quoting Liam McGuinty, the son of our former Premier who, at his deputation before the committee on the ORPP, representing the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, expressed some very valid concerns within the business community. I heard loud and clear, when I was in my riding, the opposition to the government's ORPP plan, the fact that there is so much misinformation out in the community about that. I hope that during debate today and in the days ahead, someone from the government will talk about their commitment to Bill 57, and really let businesses know exactly what their plans are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for final comments and questions.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On behalf of my other two Liberal members that spoke earlier, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I just want to comment on some of the remarks made here.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said that we have lots of members here and that we're splitting the time up. We have 58 members here, 58 that could speak to this bill. Do you want all 58 to get up? I don't know. We're sharing our time; we get three in one 20-minute time period and perhaps three in the next 20-

minute time period. When we get into 10-minute rotations then perhaps we can get more people standing up. That was also echoed by the member for Leeds–Grenville.

We've always brought bills to committee, and unlike the Conservative Party, there has always been debate on third reading—at least as far as I've been here there's been debate on third readings. I heard that was the case before, but I wasn't around to see that happen.

The member from London–Fanshawe mentioned also, similar to comments made earlier, about the RRSP or the Canada Pension Plan being better. Why would this be bad? I don't understand why this would be bad. It's quite clearly laid out. I think Bill 57 will encourage people—the money is pooled into a pension plan—to contribute. I think it's a good thing to do.

Basically, in some ways, I only save for the Canada Pension Plan, because that's the one that's automatically taken from me every single paycheque.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines mentioned something very important: Five other provinces have already implemented this. We're not the first to do it, and we're not doing something that's silly. You have five provinces across Canada that have already done this. So I think it's a good thing to do. We should proceed with this.

I thank the members for their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I'm planning on using my entire 20 minutes because we feel that we need to have every opportunity presented to us to represent our constituents and to do the job we're meant to do.

What we're facing right now, I'm afraid—from the government side—is a version of speed debating that could replicate speed dating. It's a little bit ridiculous because saving for retirement is very, very important. Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, is an interesting proposal put forward by Minister Sousa. We need to take planning for our future very, very seriously, but we also have to trust that Ontarians can get it right. Because, Speaker, what I don't trust, at this stage of the game, is the Liberal government to get it right. I worry about that because so many times in this House we have seen acts come through first, second and third reading that tend to have a knee-jerk reaction to issues. I am afraid this is just a little bit of window dressing to cover up for other actions of this government that are detrimental to the future of our Ontario population. For instance, they want to talk about pooled registered pension plans, but how much money will Ontarians have to go into their pooled registered pension plans when, on the other hand, they are trying to hit the Liberal hand going into their pocket that is squeezing every last cent out where they can?

We had an eHealth premium introduced—the largest tax in Ontario's history—by this Liberal government. Where did that revenue go? It was to go to health care, but quietly it slipped into general revenue.

The fact of the matter is, just yesterday, we heard of another knee-jerk reaction and an example of the Liberal government wanting to jump on the bandwagon with regard to using people's sincere concern over climate change to introduce another opportunity to tax Ontarians. Their cap-and-trade proposition that has come forward in the announcement that we heard yesterday by the Premier and Minister Murray is nothing more than a tax. Unfortunately, there are very few pennies left in Ontario pockets these days. Here we have a government trying to reach in again and squeeze every single last cent out. It's not right.

It's interesting: When a government is \$300 billion in debt, I question how effectively they can manage a pooled registered pension plan. It's an interesting concept because I just feel—like they did yesterday—with the debt load that they're carrying and the enormous deficit, they're just looking for every possible revenue tool available, all at the expense of Ontario taxpayers.

I really admire my colleague and friend from York–Simcoe. She has given a lot of thought and a lot of time to this issue. She has done her homework. She has taken time to explain to us as a caucus what it means, in terms of the impacts of a pooled registered pension plan. I dare say that I'm worried that the government across the floor from me actually hasn't taken the time to do due diligence. I think that's a trend that we're seeing from this government.

Not only do we see speed debating happening on this floor; we're seeing speed legislation. So much is knee-jerk reaction. Have they done a cost-benefit analysis of the Ontario pooled registered pension plan that they're proposing? What is the bottom line? What would this mean for Ontario taxpayers and for people struggling to get by?

If they were really sincere about helping Ontarians, they would be making life a little bit easier in Ontario by way of addressing the exorbitant increases in energy. They would be addressing the issues that really matter. Instead, they're piling on more pressure after more pressure on the shoulders of people throughout this province. There's going to be a breaking point, and I worry about that. When we reach that breaking point, Ontario will not be in a position to have a lot of pooling happening because, just like our young people are quickly leaving this province, our seniors will be leaving the province as well and following their children to Alberta.

Mr. Mike Colle: Alberta? Give me a break.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's true. I have people in my constituency who have chosen to follow their children. Their children have good jobs in Alberta. Another family chose to relocate to Saskatchewan. People are moving west. They are looking for a break from the burden that this Ontario government has given. It's actually shameful.

I think it's shameful that there was heckling from across the floor, because it just shows how disconnected this government has become from the true population in this province. I cannot believe that somebody would

question—valuing family and valuing dollars and tired of having every last penny stripped out of their pocket—people’s motives for moving closer to their family. I think that’s very sad.

0930

When we talk about saving for our future, I can’t help but think about another bill that this Liberal government tried to bring through: the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, where they were going to make small businesses, manufacturers and small farming operations pay out of their own pockets to collaborate so they can match an individual’s contribution to a pension plan. These small businesses are suffering.

Again, they’re just pulling straws. They’re pulling from every different angle because they’re so desperate for money, because they have a huge deficit. We’re paying \$11 million in interest on a regular basis. It’s just disgusting how they’re going forward. I dare say that it’s confusing for the average Ontarian, because on one hand they’re talking about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, where a business would contribute to a pension and match what an individual pulls in, and now we’re debating another bill, an act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans. This government is stretching, as I say, for revenue tools every which way they can, because the fact of the matter is, they just won’t curb their wasteful spending. They are on a track that is going to take us right down the proverbial tube, and who’s going to pay for it at the end of the day? It is indeed Ontarians. That’s why so many are looking for an out.

Again, coming back to small business, I just want to take a moment and share a letter that I received from a constituent, a small business in my riding, Exeter Chrysler Ltd., to put perspective on how stressful it is at this stage of the game for business and people to make ends meet. The letter reads:

“I’m writing on behalf of Exeter Chrysler Ltd, a new car dealership in your riding that has been in business for 25 years. As a new car dealer, my dealership doesn’t just sell and service vehicles. Our dealership creates well-paying jobs for 16 men and women in this local community.

“As an employer, I am very concerned about the new cost of doing business.... With a massive red tape burden, high electricity costs, the highest WSIB premiums in Canada, a pending carbon tax, and now an Ontario Registered Pension Plan” and possibly another framework for pooled registered pension plans as well, “these costs make for an increasingly difficult climate for job creation and economic growth.”

It’s interesting because the burden that this Liberal government is placing, according to this person’s perspective, is estimated to take \$47 million per year from the auto sector.

Speaker, this individual is just one of hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario who are concerned with the government and its direction.

He closes by asking the government to provide clarity to the business community and the public around the

potential impacts that their decision-making and their legislation has. It’s an interesting go.

We need to be very careful as we go forward. Again, I question that we are going down a path where we have a government that’s nothing but knee-jerk activists, if you will, jumping on bandwagons, stretching wherever they can to generate revenue just to cover their backsides.

Again, when we look at, specifically, Bill 57, which deals with pooled registered pension plans, we have to take a look at the people who are interested in this. But I think the manner in which it has been presented, in conjunction with the other legislation that has been debated as well—people across Ontario are finding it very confusing. It’s very important, just in carrying over from my colleague from York–Simcoe’s comments last week, that we have to review exactly what we’re talking about.

With regard to this particular pension plan, what does it mean to be pooled? Again, there is so much confusion out there in the small business world, amongst Ontarians, amongst even legislators, with regard to where this government is going. So let’s talk about this particular act.

What does it mean to be pooled? What does it mean to be registered? Obviously, other pension plans are registered, so that’s not quite as potentially unknown as the pooled part. But this is a legislative initiative that comes from the leadership of the federal government in being able to provide people with a savings instrument that could take them anywhere across the country. Again, I come back to the fact that there was actually a member from the Liberal government heckling the fact that I said seniors and parents are following their children to other provinces because they are tired of what is happening in Ontario. Meanwhile, this very piece of legislation that we’re debating today allows them to move their savings easier.

Again, I come back to this: How well does the Liberal caucus actually know what’s going on in Ontario, and within their own legislation as well? Again, I question, if they don’t know what’s going on and they don’t understand how their impacts are causing Ontarians to make very big decisions in moving out of this province—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Or they don’t care.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Actually, maybe that’s it. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex just said maybe it’s not a matter of understanding; maybe it’s a matter that they just don’t care what their direction over the last 10 years has given Ontarians, which is no choice but to “get out of Dodge,” meaning get out of Ontario.

But let’s go back to this particular act. This particular act enables people, if they are tired of what’s happening under this Liberal government, to get out of Ontario and take their savings with them. So the umbrella legislation has been passed federally about two years ago, and because of that, other various provinces have picked up the opportunity that it represents and provided their constituents with companion legislation that would then allow the notion of the pool.

In 2013, the member from York–Simcoe introduced her own private member’s bill, which the government

picked up in its 2013 spring budget. Of course, I sat here with the member from York–Simcoe, and I can say, on behalf of the entire PC caucus, that we were naturally very happy that they picked it up. Because of the general confusion around pensions and pension plans—and people from all walks of life have commented on the problem of financial literacy—in terms of this particular concept, we have to utilize an opportunity around pooled pensions to grow financial literacy as well. That begs the point: Just like we need agricultural and agri-food literacy in our classrooms, we’d be remiss if we didn’t take time to say how important our financial literacy is as well. I would encourage this Liberal government to take a look at how they’re encouraging our education system to prepare our students in that regard.

Coming back to saving for the future, the pooled registered pension plan is a tool, as I said, that the federal government has provided. Finally, in Ontario, we are now making an opportunity available to residents of Ontario to become part of that pension plan that is pooled. One of the things we know about pension plans is that they need lots of members. If a pooled pension plan is going to work, they need lots of members. If you’re going to be able to act in the best interests of pensioners, then you have to have enough money to be able to go out and make good investments.

But again, can we trust this government to get it right? Time and time again, they’ve squandered dollars on scandals and mismanagement. I worry about it, but we have to hold out hope, because in terms of making good investments, it’s much easier, obviously, when you have a large number of participants. That’s the notion, actually, behind the pool: that it goes into exactly a pool, and from there, decisions are made that provide interest on the money that’s being collected and therefore the availability to go out and make investments on behalf of the pensioners.

0940

We need a good return, for goodness’ sake. I can tell you that seniors on fixed incomes do indeed need a good return in terms of their pensions, because their line of living, if you will, has been planned for some time. I worry because this Liberal government, every which angle you look at it, is causing life to become more and more expensive as every day goes by. Just yesterday we heard about a cap-and-trade initiative that’s going to drive the cost of everything through the roof, from groceries to heating your homes to the gas you put in your car. While seniors have tried to plan and they have a ceiling in terms of what their monthly expenses should be in terms of maintaining a certain quality of life—guess what?—the Liberal government, based on their announcement yesterday, is busting right through that ceiling, and they’re really causing a lot of stress, not only on seniors trying to stretch their dollars as best they can but on all Ontarians. It is such a worry.

Going back to savings: Another thing that we hear often, particularly about RRSPs and the space left in them, is that people don’t put the full amount in. That tells me that they don’t have a lot of money left over because, as I

said, the Liberals are making the cost of living in this province skyrocket because they’re so desperate to generate new revenue tools to cover their backsides.

When you take everything into account and when you look at a pooled investment system, individuals have their accounts in a pooled plan for investment purposes, and that means that you have low costs and better investment. Hopefully that allows seniors and people planning for their retirement to have a little bit of wiggle room. There’s general interest in the pooled retirement registered pension plans, and we should look at some of the interest that others have taken in this.

The first one that I’d like to use is the Portfolio Management Association of Canada. They have written to the government in support of this particular initiative, and they’ve also written to the government opposing the Ontario registered pension plan. That goes back to my point earlier. We have two different initiatives that are conflicting, and even the marketplace is recognizing that this Ontario Liberal government can’t get it right.

We have to understand and take what the Portfolio Management Association of Canada is saying to heart because there is probably no other group that understands the value of registered pension plans and the dangers of a specific, dedicated Ontario pension plan.

There is an excerpt from a letter to Minister Hunter from this association:

“We are pleased that Ontario has recognized the advantages of a PRPP program and has moved forward with PRPP legislation. PRPPs provide the opportunity to participate in a simple and straightforward pension plan.”

With that, I will conclude my comments in support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m pleased, of course, to stand in this Legislature and speak about retirement security and make comments in response to the member from Huron–Bruce.

As we’re talking about Bill 57, the pooled registered pension plan—I always find it a challenge to say “pension plan” when, really, it’s a profit plan. It is a glorified RRSP. It is part of the pooled investment system, granted, and it certainly has its place in that, but it isn’t a pension per se.

As the member said, we’re asking: What does it mean to be pooled? What does it mean to be registered? But I’d like to talk about what it actually means to be a pension. To my way of thinking, a pension has contributions both from the employee and the employer, and these PRPPs don’t oblige the employer to put in.

Interestingly, we’d heard the member talk about how pooled plans need more members in the plan, and these PRPPs, if an employer chooses—and the choice is at the employer level—to have these plans for their employees, the employees don’t have a choice whether or not to buy in. The choice is made for them. So certainly there will be more people in the plan but not more money, because, again, without that employer contribution, how large can this grow? Not nearly as large as it could have if both were contributing, as it would be with a pension.

Another thing is, the member said that we're getting to a breaking point. While I agree that, as she said, the Liberals are causing the cost of living to skyrocket, we are already at a breaking point. Those two thirds of Ontarians who don't have a workplace pension—this is not that workplace pension. This is a supplement. This is not a pension.

Thank you very much, that's my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to provide a few comments. I listened carefully to the member from Huron–Bruce and the member from Oshawa.

Let me say that what the government is doing here is providing just another opportunity for employers and employees to get into allowing their pension money to generate more income into their plan. Yes, it's a little bit better than an RRSP, because in an RRSP you are the individual who has to make the decision where the money is invested and you determine your own return on investment. But in a pooled plan, you pool the money from everybody and you would have an administrator who will give you some advice that will help you to do better, and that's the whole intent of it.

The reason the government is proceeding this way is the federal government allowed this to employers in the federal sector back in 2012. Ontario sees an opportunity here to provide it for employers in Ontario, and we're following along with other provinces.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to correct one comment made by the member from Oshawa. In the plan, where an employer elects to offer a PRPP, enrolment of employees would be automatic, subject to the ability to opt out within 60 days. So employees do have the option. If they don't like the plan their employer is offering them, they can opt out after the automatic sign-in. That's a little correction; I think the member from Oshawa is slightly off course.

But I would say to you there is no benefit in what the government is bringing here directly to the government, as was mentioned by the speaker. This is strictly to provide an opportunity for the public to have another tool at their disposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a pleasure to add some comments to the debate today, following my colleague the MPP from Huron–Bruce, who I think summed this piece of legislation up best, but most importantly discussed some of the other issues facing the province of Ontario, some of the initiatives this government is taking that are further taking Ontario down the wrong path.

This morning, for myself, it's great to rise and speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, and to follow up what my colleague from Huron–Bruce said. This government continues to tax and spend. It is the legacy of, first, Premier McGuinty, and now the current Liberal government.

I want to talk a bit about the ORPP, another pension initiative that the Liberals are undertaking. A lot of people in Ontario I don't think realize that under the ORPP initiative, if you make \$45,000 per year you are going to essentially have to cut a cheque to Premier Wynne and the Liberals for almost \$800, and the employer also has to match that contribution. So that's \$1,600 out of the economy for every employee in Ontario making \$45,000 per year.

I had the privilege of talking to Professor Lee from Ottawa at finance committee, who said that with the ORPP, anyone 40 years or older in Ontario is not going to receive the full benefit of the ORPP. Essentially, they're going to pool billions and billions and billions of dollars to spend as they see fit.

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As the member from Huron–Bruce said, it really is another tax in Ontario. In the meantime, it's also going to cost about 150,000 private sector jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to stand up to make a few comments to the member from Huron–Bruce on her debate time.

She mentioned that folks are at their breaking point. This really is going to do nothing to fix that. If a person has precarious work, if they're already working in a low-income job, this is going to do absolutely nothing except take more money out of their pocket. If there is an opt-out portion to this, I'm sure they would be doing that because they need the money in their pocket to pay for child care that's not affordable in this province. They need it for hydro that's going through the roof in this province. They need it for transit, for transportation, for insurance for their vehicle to be able to go back and forth.

If the members from the government really want to do something for the people of this province, maybe work on child care; maybe bring our hydro rates down so people can afford it. I don't think—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened very closely when the people on the other side of the House spoke, and I would appreciate the same respect back.

This isn't a pension plan. This is, as my seatmate here said, a glorified profit plan for the banks, for the insurance companies. They're the ones who are going to profit from this at the end of the day. People who want to participate in RRSPs are already doing that.

This isn't going to save the breaking point for families in this province who are at their breaking point because, like I said, it's hydro rates, it's auto insurance, it's childcare. It's the cost of a loaf of bread and a bag of milk in this province these days.

I think they need to switch their focus, keep moving forward with the ORPP. I know it's not going to save the day for people tomorrow, but at least it will do something for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the original debater, the member from Huron–Bruce, for final comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly want to express my appreciation to the members from Oshawa, Scarborough–Rouge River, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Hamilton Mountain, because it's important that everybody has an opportunity to share their perspective on Bill 57.

I have to share with you that if Ontario passes the PRPP legislation, almost 90% of all Canadians will have access to PRPPs. This will likely lower the administration costs of pooled registered plans, increase the potential purchasing power of the plans and reduce barriers of interprovincial movement and trade.

As I said, this Liberal government has made living in Ontario very difficult, and with yesterday's announcement, the cost of living in this province will continue to go through the roof. People need options. If they want to follow their family members to Alberta or Saskatchewan, this pooled pension plan enables that mobility, if you will. We need PRPPs, not an ORPP.

This government has confused the constituents throughout this province to no end. I don't know whether they've purposely tried to do that, but I can tell you, people get it. I go back to my constituent from Exeter Chrysler Ltd. He gets it, as so many others do. This government has laden Ontarians with massive red tape, high electricity costs, the highest WSIB premiums in Canada and a pending carbon tax, and now we have to try to hold this government to account.

We stand here today saying for once, maybe, they're getting it. They're seeing that a lot of people are moving out of this province because they can't afford to live here any longer. This legislation allows them to take their pension plans with them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to discuss issues that are near and dear to them and impact their everyday lives. Pension plans are one such issue. Whether you are drawing from a pension plan, contributing to a plan or longing for a plan to be offered by your employer, Ontarians are thinking about their pensions and retirement.

I think it's important to discuss the right pension framework for Ontario. The bill before us today, Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, is the wrong plan.

In Ontario, we are facing a retirement security crisis. As my honourable colleague and NDP pension critic, the member from Oshawa, stated, two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan and personal savings are not enough to fill the gap. Pooled retirement pension plans are not sufficient to make up for this and fix the retirement security crisis in this province.

I think outlining some of the reasons why there is a retirement security crisis in Ontario will help us understand

which pension legislation we need to be moving forward. From there, I hope to outline why the legislative regime outlined in Bill 57 is insufficient in dealing with this.

To expand on this point, the cost of living in this province is skyrocketing. The cost to make ends meet in Ontario, to raise your children, and to put gas in the family Chrysler Town and Country minivan are all on the rise. Looking simply at increases in hydro rates in this province will help us understand these rising costs and the impact this has on Ontario families.

According to the Ontario Energy Board, rates have gone from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2002, to 14 cents per kilowatt hour today. I should point out that this tripling of rates happened over successive periods of Liberal and Conservative governments, both of which were involved in the process of the privatization of our hydro system.

Windsor West is not immune to these increases. One constituent wrote to me in January, in the dead of winter—and believe it or not, we do get winter in the deep south of Ontario—and declared that the rates he was paying were unaffordable. To quote this person directly, the email stated, "These increases [are] absurd. Middle class [Ontarians] can't afford this. These rates need to lower as soon as possible."

"As soon as possible," says my constituent, yet this government only offers more privatization in this area.

The other point I want to expand on is that two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan. Explaining this requires some nuance. In Windsor and the rest of southwestern Ontario, a major issue we are grappling with is the loss of our manufacturing footprint in the rest of North America.

In Windsor specifically, we can see this in the automotive sector. These manufacturing jobs usually come with workplace pension plans. Ideally, these would be defined benefit plans. Simply put, in these plans the beneficiaries can expect a certain level of income in their retirement because it is based on their salaries and years of service. Their retirement benefit is defined.

Unfortunately, labour trends in Ontario are shifting. Statistics Canada reported last week that manufacturing, as a total share of employment in Canada, fell to just over 9% in March. We saw this story published in reports all over the weekend. It speaks to the importance of these industries to Canadians. These industries are vital to the economy of southwestern Ontario.

Statistics Canada also released the latest job numbers last week. Again, Windsor's jobless rate was among the highest in the country at 11.1% unemployment. This is a staggering increase from the already high February figure of 9.6%.

The Windsor Star reported that, a large part of this drastic increase was because of the 4,500 Windsor Assembly Plant employees currently laid off. Now, these layoffs are only temporary while Fiat Chrysler retools their plant, but these figures underscore how important the automotive industry is to Windsor.

I'm glad that investments are being made in our assembly plant, and I know this will help sustain other

industries in my community, like the very successful tooling industry. What I want, and what people across southwestern Ontario want, is to see jobs in automotive and parts manufacturing available to the next generation of workers. We want our children to have the same options we did and benefit from the excellent quality of life that working in an auto plant or a tooling shop offers.

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Ontario needs to not only keep its current automotive plants in operation, but needs to attract investment and expand its automotive footprint throughout North America. To do this, my New Democrat colleagues and I have continually called for a comprehensive automotive strategy. This can include incentives for investment, research and development, and coordinating intergovernmental involvement in the automotive industry. We need this government to work with industry and those employed in the sector, to bring automotive investment to southwestern Ontario.

Strategizing around industries that have a history of providing workplace pensions to hard-working Ontarians is one way to help bring about a level retirement security in this province, but of course it's not the only way. We need a strong public sector pension plan.

With the decline in manufacturing jobs, we are seeing more working Canadians employed in service sector jobs than ever before. Statistics Canada reports that in March, the share of Canadians working in service industries climbed above 78%.

Many of my constituents are employed in the service sector and perform jobs in areas like retail and food service. These people work hard, but are often not compensated nearly as well as those employed in manufacturing. A disappointing characteristic of many service jobs is that they do not come with an employee pension plan. We need real action to help Ontarians plan for their retirement and retire comfortably.

The Canada Pension Plan has been praised several times on both sides of this chamber and is the Canadian benchmark for a strong retirement framework. This plan is universal, portable and directly benefits retirees. It also offers extremely low investment fees.

I think many Canadians were disappointed, although perhaps not surprised, but disappointed nevertheless, when the federal government decided, in 2013, not to enhance the Canada Pension Plan.

Instead, the Conservative government opted for a pooled retirement pension plan model. A pooled retirement pension plan is essentially an expensive pooled savings mechanism that is structured a bit like a Registered Retirement Savings Plan. One of the main problems with these private sector plans is that they charge outrageous management fees, compared to plans like CPP. For example, Canadians pay 2% or more for administration of their RRSPs, whereas the large public pensions, such as CPP, pay well less than 1% for fund administration. Fees erode returns for Ontarians and everyone across Canada. The most beneficial plans will have the lowest fees. It's unlikely to find low fees in a pension plan that's geared

towards profiting the administrator rather than solely benefiting its contributors.

The bill before us today attempts to establish and provide for the administration of PRPPs in Ontario. It draws from and largely adopts 2012 federal legislation. If passed, the bill would extend the regulatory authority over PRPPs to the Ontario Superintendent of Financial Services and set out the process for a PRPP administrator to rule on the decisions of the superintendent.

The bill would also include PRPPs in the definition of a pension plan and add PRPPs to the list of vehicles to which a plan can permit a former member or eligible spouse to transfer plan assets.

This bill, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, is flawed by design.

PRPPs do not require employers to contribute to an employee's plan. Generally, this means there is less in the pool, and we can conceive that this would likely lead to reduced returns. These returns, as I've stated before, are subjected to much higher fees than we see in more traditional public plans, like the CPP.

A few points to add here: PRPPs are market-based and cannot offer the predictability that many Ontarians entering retirement require, so that they can plan ahead of time for their retirement. Moreover, employers can offer their employees enrolment into a PRPP but do not have to contribute anything themselves. This is a direct contrast to the employer/employee contribution model we see in the CPP and, most recently, in the Ontario pension plan.

Bill 57 sets up the structure to allow for PRPPs. This Liberal government touted the creation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan as the progressive way forward, only to slot the creation of pooled retirement plans next on the order paper. This government is playing a shell game with our retirement.

I spoke on Bill 56 and asked for details. Instead, I get the government focusing on a pooled retirement regime when they should be focused on setting up the ORPP. We're concerned that, rather than allowing for the ORPP to take effect and then looking into some supplemental saving options, if they have such a desire to do so, this government has decided to simultaneously introduce the framework for profit-making pooled plans. Yes, on the same day that the Liberals tabled a bill setting out a framework for an Ontario pension plan that includes both employee and employer contributions, they also tabled a bill allowing the sale of pooled, for-profit plans.

Will PRPPs be considered comparable to the ORPP, thus making those enrolled in PRPPs exempt from contributing to the ORPP? This is the question our NDP pension critic has tried to have answered several times, but this government will not provide a clear and comprehensive answer. This question is an important one, and I hope in the coming weeks, the government provides us with a definitive answer.

The clear winners in PRPPs are the large banks and insurance industries. PRPPs are a financial product, not a pension plan. As a product, those administering PRPPs

receive a share in their performance. As I stated before, the administrator of the plan erodes the return for the beneficiary through excessive fees. Also, as I've said before, employers are not obligated to contribute to their employees' PRPPs. Despite Bill 57 trying to expand the definition of a pension to include PRPPs, these pooled plans are financial products, not pensions.

I want to clarify with my remarks here. I do not wish to be seen as arguing that financial products do not have a role to play in our retirement savings. Certainly, many families across Ontario contribute to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan or a tax-free savings account or employ other mechanisms to help save for their retirement. What I'm saying is that the financial products must be viewed as additional saving tools and not foundational mechanisms for retirement planning. Purchasing these products can be a way to augment your pension plan, but they cannot become your pension plan.

I'm aware of my time, Speaker, and I'm glad I had a chance to voice my opposition to this bill. At a time when we need to unpack the crucial details of the Ontario pension plan and have a discussion on how to foster growth in industries that provide good jobs to Ontarians, complete with competitive pension plans, this government is appeasing its friends in the financial sector.

Describe a PRPP as you will, it is not a pension plan. A pension provides security in retirement and sees both employer and employee make contributions. A pension is the vehicle of your retirement: a way for you to travel, pay for your hobbies and spoil your grandchildren. A pension is foundational for hard-working, middle-class Ontarians. A PRPP is not a pension at all.

With the little amount of time I have left, I'd just like to go back over some of the points that I made. I spoke at some length about the automotive sector and the importance of the automotive sector—the manufacturing sector, frankly—to Windsor and Essex county, but it's important across the province as well. I think an important thing to address is the pension security of people who work in all sectors who have a pension plan offered through their workplace. They put in many, many years in order to reap the benefits of that pension. We're seeing more and more across the province that those pensions are not secure. We have companies that declare bankruptcy or they close up shop and move on across the border to the States or to Mexico, and they leave the employees who dedicated 20 or 30 years of their life to the company without retirement security, without a pension.

I think that when we're looking at pension plans for the broader public, we need to make sure that they're secure plans. When we're looking at the PRPPs, I think the key here is the excessive fees that will be charged to those who contribute to them. Therefore, their return may not be exactly what they need in order to be able to live comfortably in retirement.

We see the cost of living going up, as my constituent—and this is not the only constituent who has written my office or phoned my office to speak to me about the cost of hydro. People across the province are having a

very difficult time paying their hydro bill. They're deciding between whether they're going to eat or whether they're going to keep the lights on. I think that we need to make sure that when people do have the opportunity to put money away into retirement, into a pension plan, that pension plan needs to be fairly secure; they're not looking at losing a good portion of what they've struggled to put into it; they're not losing that to these excessive fees; we're not having people on Bay Street or those in the insurance industry getting rich off of them and them having a secure retirement at the expense of those who struggle to pay into these.

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I had also talked about being able to enjoy family time in retirement. I think that's something else we need to be sure of. Again, a lot of these people who would be contributing are in lower-income, minimum wage jobs. This has to be something where they know their money is secure when they do manage to put it in and that in the future—should they have grandchildren, should they want to retire and travel with their loved ones and their family members—that money is secure and it's there for them to be able to do that.

We need to make sure that people have the opportunity to opt out. I know a member from the government side had mentioned there is the opportunity to opt out, but I think we see—when you see the commercials on TV, “Phone now and order this,” people think it's a great idea. They call in, they order it and they don't necessarily see the fine print that says, “You are now going to be on an auto-ship program,” where they're going to ship out every month and they're going to bill you every month.

We need to be very careful with a plan such as this, although I think it was mentioned that there are 60 days and then they have an opt-out period. There are 60 days when they don't have the opportunity to opt out. I'm curious to know if for the 60 days they paid into it, they are able to get that money back, should they decide to opt out.

I also think that people lead very busy lives and they—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes. They're at work, they've got family to take care of, they're worried about paying their bills, whether they can afford to keep the lights on, and sometimes deadlines pass—they miss the deadline to cancel whatever it was they ordered. I'm afraid this plan is setting them up for that same type of situation, where we could see five or six months or a year pass and they're paying into something that they don't necessarily want to be paying into. We need to make sure that it's clear to people where their money is going. We need to make sure that everybody understands what this PRPP is and what their rights and obligations are. We need to make sure that they know they have the opportunity to opt out.

But ultimately, we would rather not see this bill pass. We think there are definitely better options available than a PRPP. I certainly wouldn't want to work my whole life and put into a plan, only to find out when I retire that

there's less in the plan than what I had been paying into it all those years. We need to make sure that whatever avenue people use to invest their money to save for retirement, that money is secure at the end.

I understand that even with RRSPs there is some uncertainty as to whether or not you are going to gain some on your investment or whether you're going to lose a little bit on your investment. There's always some uncertainty there, but I think that an item such as the PRPP sets people up for even a greater loss in their investment. That's something we certainly cannot afford in this province, as I mentioned, with the cost of living going up. We look at the hydro rates and grocery rates; gas rates have gone up. We certainly want to make sure that when someone is in their senior years, when they have worked their entire life and they're looking to retire, they have the income and the stability to be able to live not only in comfort, but to be able to enjoy what they have worked their whole life to do.

I think I'm just about out of time, Speaker, so I'll wrap it up for now. I look forward to further debate, when my colleague from Nickel Belt might have an opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to thank the member from Windsor West. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments at a later time when this bill is debated.

I'd like to thank all members in the House this morning for their contribution to the debate on Bill 57.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now almost 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to welcome again a frequent visitor, Susan Gapka from the Trans Lobby Group.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to welcome Susan Walmer, executive director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, to the House today. She's a resident of the great riding of Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome my good friend Mark Kunkel from Powassan. He's here with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm delighted to welcome a student from Saint-Michel school in my riding, from Kingsville: Chloe Mastronardi, who is serving as a page here with us.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd like to welcome Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; he'll be with us today. Later today there's a reception down in the dining room, and I encourage all members to attend.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome Gerald Smith, president of the Ontario Dental Association—they're not in yet, but they're in to see people from Queen's Park today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to steal somebody's thunder and welcome Linda Jeffrey, the mayor of Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got a check mark here; I'd like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for stepping on my normal procedures.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome a couple of guests from the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. They're in the east members' gallery: Lee-Ann Kant and Yvonne Wyndham, who is a constituent of the great riding of Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of our colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, I'd like to welcome the mother of our page Samantha Lin. Her mother is Teresa Ma. She will be in the public gallery watching question period this morning.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Dr. Stephen Abrams from the ODA, the Ontario Dental Association, will be joining us shortly. He is a Londoner, and I used to work for his mom and dad at the market in London.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome a good friend of many of us here, Susan Gapka. Susan is part of the Trans Lobby Group. Susan had a great opportunity of us going running together in my riding of Ottawa Centre. She's a great runner. Welcome to Queen's Park, Susan.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome here today, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, a member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Peggy Brekveld, who will be in the lobby here very shortly.

As well, Dr. Jerry Smith, a friend of mine from Thunder Bay, is here on behalf of the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome Jack and Ann Murphy. They came here all the way from St. Marys, Ontario. Welcome, Ann and Jack Murphy.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to introduce the father of page captain Ryan Arff from Ajax–Pickering, who just happens to be standing beside me. His father, Dietmar Arff, will be in the public gallery this morning, and I'd certainly like to welcome him.

At the same time, on behalf of MPP Amrit Mangat from Mississauga–Brampton South, I'd like to introduce Cindy Atkinson, the mother of page captain Thomas Atkinson. Mrs. Atkinson will be here in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I, too, would like to welcome Mayor Jeffrey. She's here accompanying the Probus Club of Brampton. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, OSLA, here with us today. They're in the public gallery. We're joined by Peggy Allen, the president; executive members Lorie Grant and Pam Millett; and executive director Mary Cook. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is a great pleasure for me, as the MPP for Richmond Hill and also as an honorary dentist without the right to practise, to welcome members of the Ontario Dental Association to Queen's Park; spe-

cifically, two dentists from my riding of Richmond Hill: Dr. Elise Wong and Dr. C.P. Giri.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somewhat anti-climactic: We have the member from Brampton Centre in the 38th, Brampton–Springdale in the 39th and 40th and present mayor of Brampton in the east public gallery: Linda Jeffrey. Welcome home. Welcome back.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask that all members join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 41st Parliament. Would they please assemble to be introduced?

Ryan Arff from Ajax–Pickering; Thomas Atkinson from Mississauga–Brampton South; Colin Bryan from Don Valley West; Megan Chan from Oak Ridges–Markham; Olivia Colver from Haldimand–Norfolk; Ashton Corr from Niagara Falls; Misha Davies Gedalof from Davenport; Mira Gillis from Windsor–Tecumseh; Jae Min Han from Markham–Unionville; Abdullah Hasan from Scarborough–Rouge River; Afyah Islam from Beaches–East York; Samantha Lin from Carleton–Mississippi Mills; Chloe Mastronardi from Essex; Ethan McCready-Branch from Kitchener Centre; Joshua Osborne from Newmarket–Aurora; Cailyn Perry from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Luca Riccio-Durocher from Chatham–Kent–Essex; Joshua Rosenberg from York Centre; Madison Rynard from Simcoe North; Ishika Tiwari from Scarborough–Guildwood; Colton Tompkins from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; and Carina Watson from Halton. These are our pages for this session.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I'm fond of saying, get back to work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to start question period before the heckling starts.

It is now time for question period.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Acting Premier. Because of your cap-and-tax plan, you claim the cost of gas will go up three cents a litre. Well, your record says differently. We cannot trust your numbers. Minister Chiarelli once said that the rising cost of hydro was worth about a cup of coffee. However, Ontarians across this province have seen their hydro bills nearly triple under your watch. You said the cost of the gas plant scandal would be \$40 million and it ballooned to over \$1 billion.

Acting Premier, how much will gas increase under the Liberal cap-and-tax scheme?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I'm disappointed in the opposition party. They have chosen a

side. They are opposing cap and trade. They are opposing taking action on greenhouse gas. But at least I respect them for having a position on cap and trade. They've made a big mistake on this, but they've made a decision to not support this.

The third party, I think to everyone's astonishment, has actually chosen not to take a position. There are two sides to this debate. One side says, "Let's take action; we must take action," and the other side says—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

A one-sentence wrap-up, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I respect the PC Party. They have chosen a path, the wrong path, but at least they have chosen a path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I dare say we're the only party in this House that is standing up for Ontarians across this province.

Back to the Acting Premier: Your carbon tax will increase the cost of everything. You're feeding your spending addiction from the pocketbooks of hard-working Ontarians. Because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I expect the same when a question is put, as much as an answer.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Because of high energy prices in Ontario, I often hear from people who have had to choose food over heating. You force them to pick, Acting Premier, between heating and eating. That's not the Ontario that I'm proud to say I'm a member of. You're driving people out of this province. Your cap-and-tax scheme will just continue to open the door and usher people and business out of this province. What will Ontarians have to sacrifice next—their home, maybe new shoes for their children, school trips for their children? Deputy Premier, what do you say to them? What will Ontarians have to sacrifice next?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The big flaw in the PC or maybe—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —party is that they don't recognize that there are costs attached to inaction. We are already paying the price. We're seeing increased insurance costs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today, Premiers from right across this country are joining together in the fight against climate change. These Premiers represent all parties.

The world is moving on. We recognize that there is a problem that is having and will continue to have a devastating impact on our farmers, on our health, on our plants, on our animals and on our ecosystem. We must take

action. The time to take action is now, and there is a cost to inaction.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The cost to all of the Liberal action over this past decade has added up to \$23,000 on every set of shoulders in this province. It's absolutely shameful.

Again, back to the Acting Premier: Because across the globe we're seeing cap-and-tax systems riddled with scandal, fraud and corruption, it's only natural for your Liberal government to jump right on that bandwagon. I have to tell you, Acting Premier, that while we support reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we will not support this being done through another irresponsible tax. You're making it harder for the average Ontarian, and the only winners in this scenario are going to be your Liberal friends. It may be easy for you to pick winners and losers, but why should the average Ontarian pick between their kids playing hockey or heating their home, as opposed to having to pay their bills? When are you going to stand up for Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's becoming clear that the pro-carbon party is the best friend carbon ever had.

Speaker, what you must recognize and what we all must recognize is that we believe in the principle that the polluter should pay. We know that when we add a cost to carbon, businesses will reduce their emissions because it makes sense for them to do it. Why would we not reward businesses that take action to reduce emissions? That is at the heart of this.

Across the country, there is momentum building—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will come to order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Several members of the PC Party have actually voted in favour of taking immediate action. That is what we were doing. But it appears to me that what's happening now is the climate change deniers have taken control of the PC caucus. They are the ones who are driving this change.

I know there are people on your side who think this is—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said, "Call it carbon pricing, cap and trade, a market mechanism ... if you must, go

ahead and call it a tax." I'm glad we agree on something: It is a tax. It's a tax on everything.

In Australia, we know it costs families \$550 every year. Deputy Premier, how much money will your tax cost Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the question is, what does inaction cost Ontario families? We are already paying the price. We're paying now billions of dollars for the impacts of climate change, and that will accelerate; that will only grow.

Families are paying now. Ask the people of Burlington if climate change is impacting their cost of living. Ask the people who were affected by the ice storm if climate change is affecting their cost of living. We are paying the price now; we will pay the price more in the future. The time to take action is now.

The approach on cap and trade is the right way to go. I just wish the PCs would actually join the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is about money and you know it. It's about money.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member can look away all he wants, but the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order—second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Deputy Premier: Last night on CBC, your economic development minister, the man responsible for growing the economy, admitted that your carbon tax will take money out companies' hands and put it into government coffers. He said that it would take money out of our economy. That will mean fewer jobs. That will be the legacy of your carbon tax.

Deputy Premier, how many jobs will be lost under your new carbon tax?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, once again, the question is, how many jobs will be created? We are actually creating jobs, the next generation of jobs.

When the Premier and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change made their announcement yesterday, they made it at a plant that produces programmable thermostats. That is a product that is now in demand globally. It is in demand because people are trying to make wiser use of their expenditures. When people save on their energy consumption, they will save money.

We will reinvest the money in a very transparent way in a range of projects that will help families be more energy-efficient, that will build up public transit to reduce congestion, that will help factories and businesses reduce their pollution. This is an economic generator.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: My final supplementary back to the Deputy Premier: Yesterday, the Premier brought up the fact that she wanted to be able to tell her granddaughter what she did as Premier. She wanted to be able to say that she didn't have her head in the sand. That's funny, because this government has had their head in the sand for the last 12 years.

Your policies have driven jobs out of this province and have allowed our energy rates to skyrocket.

Deputy Premier, is your government okay with telling our grandchildren that they'll have no job and they will owe \$23,000 in debt?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, they don't have to take it from me. Let's hear what Michael McSweeney, president and CEO, Cement Association of Canada, has to say. He says, "There are good reasons—environmental and economic—to tackle greenhouse gas emissions now, and with some sense of urgency.... We believe Ontario is on the right track, with its plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas...."

David Paterson, corporate and environmental affairs, General Motors Canada: "GM believes there can be opportunities in addressing climate change and that we need to go on with that and do it."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's just about it. Every sentence.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ken Neumann of the Steelworkers says, "There is a pressing need to address climate change. And if the revenues from carbon pricing are reinvested in Ontario's economy, we can create a lot of jobs and build things we want and need, like more transit, more renewable energy, and more energy-efficient industry."

Speaker, there are many people—

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For over a decade, the Liberals have been opposed to privatizing Hydro One. My question is, can the Deputy Premier tell us what has changed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We in this province have a very clear and tangible need to invest in infrastructure. I think many people came in today and experienced that need themselves this morning. We must invest in infrastructure. Our people are depending on us to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We need to pay for it, and we will maximize our assets so we can build new assets, like better infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Deputy Premier remembers 2003. It was when she and her Premier were first elected. Their leader, Dalton McGuinty, at that time said, "Ontario families want affordable, reliable electricity. They know that the sale of the grid that carries electricity to their homes is a disaster for consumers."

Can the Deputy Premier tell us whether she and the Premier believed in that plan back in 2003 when they ran under it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think a lot of people are disappointed that the NDP has become the party of the status quo. They don't want to change; they don't want to build for tomorrow's economy. They are rooted in the past. I have to say that they have opposed changes to the LCBO, opposed changes to the Beer Store, opposed changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When they oppose any ways to fund transit, they are opposing infrastructure investment. You cannot have it both ways; if you want to build it, you have to pay for it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier first won her seat with a team that opposed the sell-off of Hydro One. Dalton McGuinty said this about Hydro One: "These people have never had their say on this, not in an election, not even in public hearings." Now this Liberal Premier, this Liberal government, is planning a sale of Hydro One without running in an obvious way on that plan, without any hearings whatsoever with the people of Ontario, without ever explaining to people what it means or how much it will cost Ontarians on their hydro bills.

My question is, will the Deputy Premier tell Ontarians exactly who is behind the Liberals' 180-degree about-face on this file?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of Ontario are looking for the government to take leadership when it comes to building infrastructure. No matter what part of the province you go to, whether it's small communities or large communities, we hear over and over again that the infrastructure we have is not adequate. Our infrastructure deficit is reducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our infrastructure deficit is reducing the ability of companies to create jobs. We must act. We're acting. It's disappointing that the NDP has once again chosen to oppose without offering any constructive solutions of their own.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is also for the Deputy Premier.

You know, it wasn't just Dalton McGuinty. The Liberal energy critic, Sean Conway, had this to say about Hydro One in 2002 in the lead-up to that 2003 election:

"The Tory government has no mandate to sell off the grid and there has been no consultation about such a sale ... The transmission grid—located in the heart of North America—is one of Ontario's most valuable assets. It is unbelievable that it is being sold without any discussion or debate."

I agree, Speaker. It is unbelievable that that's happening. Yet now the Liberal government is planning to do exactly what they crowed about and opposed so vehemently a decade ago.

Can the Deputy Premier explain to the people of this province how and when it is that the Liberals lost their way?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know what's unbelievable? The unbelievable thing is that they ran on this plan. What is unbelievable is that you took the assumptions in our fiscal plan, which included maximizing assets, and you ran on it. So it's extraordinary that you ran on it but you didn't know about it.

Talking about losing your way, I have a letter here from May 2014. It says:

"Dear Andrea,

"We are writing to you as long-time supporters of the ONDP who are deeply distressed by the current election campaign ... In this election, we are seriously considering not voting NDP.

"We were angry when you voted against the most progressive budget in recent Ontario history."

I know they take offence. But let's see: Cathy Crowe signed this letter, Martha Friendly—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure you'll be getting some Dear Kathleen and Dear Deb letters pretty soon with the direction you're going through right now.

It wasn't just Dalton McGuinty or Sean Conway. Even Dwight Duncan, the former Liberal finance minister, said this about asset sales: "We're certainly not going to rush anything and we're not going to do it without what I would call a very robust and meaningful public conversation."

And yet here we are with a Liberal Premier who claims to be the most progressive leader since Confederation planning asset sales without any consultation whatsoever. Exactly how progressive is that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I hate to go back—but I will—to this letter from NDP supporters who say they were angry when the NDP voted against the most progressive budget in recent Ontario history.

They say: "You have not explained to ONDP voters why this will be a successful election strategy and why they should vote against their principles."

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To continue, "It seems in your rush to the centre you are abandoning those values and constituencies that the party has always championed. If the NDP does not stand with working people, poor people, with women, with immigrants, then what does it stand for? We urge you to change course."

Speaker, Grace-Edward Galabuzi signed this letter, Michele Landsberg signed this letter, Geoff Bickerton—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —Patricia Chorney Rubin. Speaker, the list—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, the list is stopping.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure all of those folks are carefully watching the right-wing turn the Liberals have taken.

The bottom line is that privatization of hydro is a very, very bad idea. It always has been. We know first-hand that private hydro drives bills through the roof. It is bad for families and it is bad for businesses. The plan doesn't make sense and the Liberals know it.

Ontarians deserve to know how and why the Liberals lost their way when it comes to public hydro. Can the Deputy Premier explain why the Liberals are taking a page from Mike Harris's and Ernie Eves's playbook in planning to privatize Hydro One when they know full well that it is a very, very bad idea?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said yesterday, the easy part of being in opposition is that you get to oppose. But the part where you have a real responsibility is to actually provide constructive advice.

You say you want to build transit. You want to build transit, but you oppose it every step of the way. Once again, you're opposing investments in transit and in other kinds of infrastructure across this province. If you have a better way to pay for it, we would love to hear that.

We are committed to moving this province forward and to building this province up. We will do that by investing in much-needed infrastructure.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

Experts are warning us that your cap-and-trade tax scheme is vulnerable to fraud, manipulation, higher costs to businesses, and job losses.

The member from Leeds–Grenville asked you specifically how many jobs will be lost. You wouldn't answer him, so let's reach into the gas plant scandal file once again and read the confidential advice to cabinet. Your own file tells you how many job losses your carbon tax will bring to Ontarians. The once-secret document states that 5,000 jobs will be lost—

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure will come to order—second time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Your once-secret document states that 5,000 jobs will be lost and result in "a relocation of business to lower-cost jurisdictions."

Deputy, why does it always take a secret document to get us the truth in this Legislature?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What is very much on the public record is that the PC Party has been captured by the climate-change deniers. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said last June, "I'm very skeptical of climate change.... We can't worry about what's going to happen in 50 years." The member for

Carleton–Mississippi Mills said, “CO₂ is a positive gas. We need CO₂. There is a positive side to that.”

Speaker, I know that there have been many voices, including the member for Nipissing’s, that say we must take action. The question is: Why are you now saying that this action is not what we should be doing?

The business community has been vocal in their support of this because they see the opportunities. I think you should see those opportunities too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Deputy Premier, you knew about the 5,000 job-loss number. You were in cabinet when this was presented. Finance ministry officials told you about the job losses from your new revenue tools.

So let’s add the ministry numbers up—I know it hurts to hear these facts: 54,000 jobs lost in your pension tax scheme, and they said your cap-and-trade tax scheme will slash another 5,000 jobs or more.

Deputy, look around you. Can Ontario afford to lose another 60,000 jobs? You say this is about emissions, but we all know that it’s only about the cash needed to fuel your spending addiction.

What do you have to say now to those 5,000 families who are about to pay for your latest tax grab?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is interesting coming from a party that committed to firing 100,000 people. But let’s just say—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We’ve received a letter of support for our policy from Ontario business leaders. They say:

“We support your government’s intention to take measures to address climate change by establishing a transparent economy-wide price on carbon.

“We share your conviction that the test of a successful climate policy is one that also enhances our competitiveness and long-term prosperity.”

A number of people signed this letter, including people from Hewlett-Packard, Tembec, Teck Resources, Investco Capital, The Co-operators Group, Desjardins Group, Jacob Securities, Vancity, Mountain Equipment Co-op, the Cement Association of Canada, Walker Industries, Interface Inc., Catalyst Paper, Philips Lighting Canada, Hydrogenics—

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

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, last night my colleague from Windsor West and I attended a meeting in Amherstburg, where that community, along with Harrow and Kingsville, are being forced to pick and choose which community will get to keep its school. We listened as hundreds of parents gathered for an opportunity to speak out, but the meeting was limited to only 90 minutes of comments. Many did not get a chance.

Minister, why is this government silencing communities, that desperately want a say in their school closures, by cutting the required amount of community meetings in half?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m not sure how he thinks I determine the length of the meeting, but whatever.

What I think really is quite interesting is that there are a number of people on the side opposite who actually have a history as school trustees—as do I, and as do a number of people on our side. I think we need to think about the history of the people who were actually trustees.

For example, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, when she was a trustee, supported a motion to close Alison Park Public School and a motion to close Lincoln Avenue Public School.

You mentioned the member from Windsor West. When the member from Windsor West was a trustee on the Greater Essex County District School Board—

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

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Minister of Education: Minister, this government’s choice to continue to use a flawed funding formula forces trustees to close schools, which means this government—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: What that means, Minister, is this government’s record for closing schools far exceeds any trustee’s.

Minister, it was clear last night that the communities affected are deeply concerned with what’s happening to their schools. Parent after parent came forward with innovative ideas on expanding the role of their schools into vibrant community hubs.

Instead of taking a proactive approach to the creation of community hubs, this government has chosen to ignore the concerns of families and close schools.

When will this government recognize the importance of neighbourhood schools, stop ignoring the concerns of families and stop closing schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me just finish here. When the member from Windsor West was a trustee, she supported the closure of Forster secondary school. She supported the closure of Victoria Public School. She did not oppose the closure of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex will come to order—second time.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: And she didn’t—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: And she didn’t oppose the closure of Ruthven or Kingsville public schools, because what they recognized was that as demographics shift, things need to shift.

What she’s failing to recognize is that, in fact, we have put in the budget a \$750-million school consolidation fund

to help local boards do exactly what she's asking: create community hubs.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

Minister, I understand that this morning, you visited the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson University. The DMZ is one of Canada's largest business incubators and working spaces for entrepreneurs, and it's based right here in Toronto. This unique community is home to entrepreneurs and innovators of all ages. In fact, innovation and encouraging Ontario's young entrepreneurs to succeed, ensuring that Ontario is globally competitive, are key priorities for this government.

In light of this, could the Minister of Finance please tell us more about his visit to the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson University this morning?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Burlington for the question.

Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right: The DMZ is the top-ranked university incubator in Canada and fifth in the world. It's a unique hub that helps start-ups succeed by connecting businesses with customers and young entrepreneurs.

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The member from Burlington is also quite right in the fact that encouraging and fostering innovative ideas is a key priority of this government. Investing in young entrepreneurs in Ontario, the future leaders of tomorrow, is a key component of the 2015 budget. And, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure today to announce that budget date, and I am privileged to be able to table and deliver the 2015 budget in this very House on Thursday, April 23, 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is again to the Minister of Finance, and I'd like to thank him for his leadership.

Minister, I'm pleased to hear of the government's focus on supporting entrepreneurs and continuing to ensure that Ontario is an innovative hub not just in North America, but globally. It is fascinating projects like the DMZ at Ryerson University and innovative conversations happening in my own riding of Burlington, in partnership with McMaster University, that will help to make this future a reality.

I'm also pleased to hear that the 2015 budget will be tabled next week, on Thursday, April 23. I know that the people of Ontario, the people in my riding of Burlington and indeed all MPPs are eager to hear about our government's next steps in building Ontario up.

Could the Minister of Finance please tell this House a bit about the upcoming 2015 Ontario budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member for Burlington for a great question.

The budget will focus on a four-part plan to build Ontario up. It will continue to build in a dynamic, innovative and competitive business environment. Another

pillar will be to continue to invest in our people, especially young entrepreneurs. We'll also continue to invest and build on our infrastructure through unlocking those very assets that we hold so dear, and we will continue to ensure that the hard-working people of Ontario receive the retirement security that they well deserve.

Last June, the people of Ontario gave us a strong mandate to continue to build a better future for the people of this wonderful province, and with the 2015 budget that's going to be coming out we are doing just that. On April 23, I look forward to tabling what I believe to be one of the most progressive and innovative budgets the people of Ontario will have ever seen.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, the Housing Services Corp. pays for its operations by overcharging social housing providers for natural gas and insurance. Instead of providing housing for our most vulnerable, the money is paying for international travel and investments in Manchester, England. CityHousing Hamilton reported that in one year they paid more than \$1 million extra because they have to buy through the Housing Services Corp. A million dollars, Mr. Minister—that's rent supplements for 140 families.

Minister, if Housing Services Corp. is siphoning more than \$1 million out of social housing in Hamilton, how much is it costing Toronto Community Housing?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: First off, Mr. Speaker, I want to correct a blatant inaccuracy from the member opposite when he suggested the other day, with a great degree of disingenuousness, that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'll withdraw.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He uttered a number of terminological inexactitudes—

Interjection: That's much better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No better. Withdraw.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'll withdraw—when he suggested that we had removed the Housing Services Corp. from the sunshine list. He ought to know—I think he does know, Mr. Speaker—that you only get reported on the sunshine list if you're receiving government funds. They set it up that way when they put the legislation in place. That only happened once, and during that year it was reported, so he's incorrect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, it isn't just Hamilton and Toronto. Housing Services Corp. cost Peel housing \$200,000 in one year; in Waterloo, \$10,000 each year; in Thunder Bay, \$750,000; Bruce county; Oxford; Hastings; Halton; Prince Edward; Lennox-Addington. If they weren't required to purchase services through Housing Services Corp., they could all help people who need social housing.

Minister, 100 housing providers who buy their insurance from someone else are still forced to pay 2.5% to the Housing Services Corp.

Will you support my bill and save housing providers millions by allowing them to buy the services at the best possible price they can find in the open market?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, the honourable member's bill will be debated very soon, and we'll see where people align themselves on that.

I can say, for the record, that the Housing Services Corp. is an independent, non-profit corporation. Their board is responsible for monitoring. They've made a number of changes at my request. We're currently undergoing a third-party, independent review of the corporation and all its subsidiaries.

I'd ask the honourable member to wait until we get that report, which will be coming very soon. If there are things we need to change as a government, as a result of that, you can be darned sure we're going to do it.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last month, Niagara Falls hosted a rally to show its united support of daily, all-year GO service all the way to Niagara Falls. The people want this and regional councils want this. The member from St. Catharines, who is the chair of the government's cabinet, spoke at the rally on the need for daily GO service to Niagara Falls. In fact, during the election campaign, the member from St. Catharines said, "I can see it coming in 2015."

Niagara is united in calling for all-year, daily GO service all the way to Niagara Falls. Was the government's cabinet chair correct to tell the people of Niagara that they can expect—expect—daily all-year GO rail service to Niagara Falls by 2015?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I actually want to begin by saying that I appreciate this question from this member. I believe this is actually the very first question this member has had the opportunity to ask me since becoming the NDP's transportation critic. I applaud him for becoming the critic for transportation, and I thank him very much for that question.

Speaker, I've had the opportunity on a number of occasions to speak with representatives from the region of Niagara. In fact, as that member knows, our member, my esteemed colleague the member from St. Catharines, has been a very persistent and staunch advocate for additional infrastructure improvements, advancements and investments in Niagara region, including Niagara GO service.

My understanding is that the Niagara region is working very hard with respect to the development of a business case. I look forward, over the next couple of weeks, to having the chance to meet with them, to hear directly from them about the findings of their business

case. The Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx will work with the region to study and analyze that business case and to continue to work on moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Minister, during the last election, the leader of your party, and the Premier of Ontario, said that bringing the GO train all the way to Niagara Falls "was a high, high priority." Despite this, Niagara is not mentioned anywhere in the Metrolinx report. You won't commit to a timeline, and now Metrolinx is telling us it's not a priority.

The incredible grassroots organization continues to call for this for Niagara. They have the support of all the mayors, the councils, regional councils, and even the chair of your caucus.

Can you tell the people of Niagara if this government plans to follow through on its words and bring daily two-way GO service to Niagara Falls in 2015?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for his question and for his obvious passion on this. I think that member needs to recognize, as everyone does on this side of the House, that as we go forward with our infrastructure investments and how we prioritize those, all of our decisions regarding these matters will be based on a demonstrated business case and consideration of provincial infrastructure and budget priorities.

As I mentioned, I look forward to receiving that business case. Metrolinx is already working with Niagara region. We've heard, certainly, from the member from St. Catharines.

Speaker, people watching these proceedings—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He can't insinuate that somebody is lying, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, as I was saying, people watching these proceedings from home, from Niagara region, would have to remember that when that party had the opportunity to support our plan to invest \$29 billion over the next 10 years, they chose to reject it, not once but twice.

We're going to get the job done. We're going to move the province forward.

Interjections.

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

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. The Premier has prioritized burden reduction so that businesses small and large can continue to grow across the province. In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, businesses have been asking me about this very important issue. Burden reduction was a prominent theme in both the 2014 throne speech and budget and is also included in the minister's public mandate letter.

Just recently, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released their provincial report card on this sub-

ject. Would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform this House of Ontario's standing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora for what is a really important question for us as an economy, and certainly for our small business community.

Since 2008, our government has eliminated more than one in six regulatory requirements, or 80,000 regulatory burdens. That's significant. In fact, we're working towards achieving our burden-reduction strategy, which will save close to \$100 million by 2016-17 for small businesses—very important for our economy.

Because of these accomplishments, in the CFIB's 2015 Red Tape Report Card, Ontario's strategic approach to burden reduction has earned this province a B+, tying for second with one other province for the highest mark in the country. We're proud of that record, but a B+, as far as I'm concerned, is not good enough, and we want to—

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm also very proud of our government's strategic approach to burden reduction. The CFIB's grade for Ontario further demonstrates the progress we've made.

As I understand it, the CFIB also praised our government for reintroducing and passing Bill 7, the Better Business Climate Act. This bill received all-party support in its passing. Would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform this House of the importance of Bill 7 for government burden reduction?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member.

I want to thank all parties in the House for supporting Bill 7. This legislation is a clear reflection of our government working with key stakeholders to continue to grow Ontario's economy through burden reduction and cluster development, which is also really important. It was the CFIB's biggest ask a couple of years ago, and I give my predecessor credit as well for putting the beginnings of this bill together. It creates an open and transparent commitment to burden reduction. In many ways, it holds our government's feet to the fire; we have to report annually now on burden reduction, which is why the CFIB wanted us to work with them to do that.

We continue to be a national leader in reducing burden, but there's much more work to do. I'm looking forward, with this government, to working with the CFIB to continue to ensure that Ontario is a national leader in reducing regulatory burden.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

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

Minister, over the past several years the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association has called on both the federal and the provincial governments to adopt the standards of the international grading system to help

consolidate maple syrup producers, packers, distributors and consumers. The federal government has listened by implementing recent amendments to the Maple Products Regulations, and is being commended for their efforts, as this new uniform system will make it easier for consumers to identify and buy exactly what they want.

Minister, will your ministry follow suit by amending and aligning our provincial rules with the federal ones to ultimately modernize the maple syrup industry here in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank very much the honourable gentleman from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for asking me a question about the maple syrup industry in the province of Ontario.

We recognize on all sides of the House that the maple syrup industry is one of the oldest agriculture industries in the province of Ontario. Some 2,500 producers currently exist in Ontario. We harvest about 1.5 million litres of syrup, making Ontario one of the top three producers in Canada, grossing over \$32 million in maple product sales and contributing over \$53 million to Canada's GDP.

We're very aware of the new standards that have been brought in by the federal government, and I wanted to commend my good friend Ray Bonenberg, president of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, for keeping his members engaged on this very important file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, as you know, this is not the first time we've talked about this. I've written you. I spoke to you about it on several occasions on behalf of Mr. Bonenberg and the industry.

This issue is very important to the industry. Its members don't have the luxury of waiting around while you and your ministry get your act together. This puts Ontario at a disadvantage which can no longer continue to go unaddressed. The provincial government needs to move forward as quickly as possible so that there's harmonization of the maple syrup grades.

Minister, you and your ministry have been dragging your feet and holding these amendments up, to the detriment of our maple syrup producers.

The time to act is now. Will you stop delaying and make the necessary amendments to regulation 119/11 before you head off on your trade mission to China? Help our industry before you head away.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In fact, in response to my good friend, I'll be in China selling maple syrup products produced right here in Ontario.

We are taking a bit of responsible time to consult with small, medium and large maple syrup producers in the province of Ontario. Consultations will seek to identify and address requests made by maple producers, including the grading and classification of maple products. We want to have a robust consultation and we're aiming to have something in place by January 1, 2016.

It's our view, when it comes to this policy, we want to make sure we're in the sweet spot with regard to maple syrup in Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

The Hamilton Port Authority continues to push ahead with plans for a risky garbage gasification plant on Hamilton Harbour. This plan would use unproven technology that exists nowhere else in the world save for a single small pilot project in England.

Last November, I asked the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to designate this project for a full environmental assessment. After assuring us that “of course there will be an environmental assessment,” five months later the minister has done nothing.

The city’s outside experts say that a full environmental assessment is absolutely necessary. Will the Liberals listen to the experts and designate this massive and risky gasification plant for a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member knows, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is in Quebec with the Premier, working with other Premiers in other governments to develop an appropriate response to climate change and cap and trade.

I’m sure the minister will very much want to answer this question. I have been handed a note but I suspect you would like the answer from the minister. We’ll make sure you get that answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that time is ticking away. The report from the city’s experts says the Hamilton gasification plant needs a full environmental assessment. It says the plant would be “the first commercial implementation of this type in the world ... There is no similar scale operational system using this technology.”

In other words, you can’t simply scale up the results from a tiny pilot project in England, as the proponent wants to do, and expect to understand the true environmental impact of this unproven technology in a project of this size. And yet, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is ready to bet the future of Hamilton Harbour on the results of a science fair project.

Will the Liberals listen to the people of Hamilton and the experts who wrote this report and order a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: As mentioned, the minister is not here today. I don’t have a response from him directly on the particular issue that the member has raised, the leader of the third party. I do have a note, however, on Hamilton air issues generally and I can give you some of that information.

In 2011 the ministry introduced new or updated air standards for eight substances which are linked to health effects such as cancer, developmental effects or respiratory illnesses. These air standards take effect July 1, 2016. Improving air quality and combatting sources of air pollution is a top priority for the ministry. The ministry has issued site-specific standards for suspended particulate matter at four of Ontario’s iron and steel facilities.

This is in the context of Hamilton air issues generally. I don’t have a note for her specifically on the issues that she’s raised here today, but hopefully some of this information will provide some level of comfort that the ministry is on the issue when it comes to Hamilton air issues generally speaking.

1130

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all know that our population is aging, and so too are the many long-term-care homes across the province that house our elderly population. While the care and delivery each and every day by our nurses, personal support workers, doctors, physiotherapists and other front-line health professionals is nothing short of excellent, we also want to ensure that our loved ones are in the best possible facilities.

In the fall, the minister announced incentives for operators to renew hundreds of older long-term-care homes in communities from one end of Ontario to the other. Mr. Speaker, could the minister provide an update to the House on the status of that important project?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Absolutely. I would be delighted to give an update. I want to begin by thanking the member from Kitchener Centre for the question and all of her advocacy for our seniors in this province.

I know that for our residents, a long-term-care home is just that: a home. All Ontarians who make long-term-care facilities their home deserve to live in comfortable, inviting and safe environments, Speaker. That is why our government is providing increased support to long-term-care-home operators to reach our goal of redeveloping 30,000 long-term-care beds. That’s about 300 homes, Speaker. That’s almost 50% of our homes that are going to be modernized.

We have been working with the sector to refine our supports in order to ensure this redevelopment program is successful. We recently distributed a survey to all our operators because we want to do this in a collaborative fashion.

The results have been great, Speaker, and I look forward—

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear the minister’s commitment to ensuring that older Ontarians are getting the best care in the best environment possible.

The minister noted in her answer that our government is working with stakeholders to bring about this very substantial undertaking, and that kind of collaboration is essential for any project of this scale.

Long-term-care-home operators do have a vital role to play in seeing the success of the redevelopment of these plans, but the voices of residents and their loved ones are just as important. Could the minister please tell us what she is doing to ensure that all parties are at the table?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, thanks to the member for Kitchener Centre. She's absolutely right. We want this to be a collaborative process in which all stakeholders, whether they are operators, whether it's the LHIN, whether it's families or whether it's residents, have a say. That's why my ministry has established a stakeholder advisory group to guide us through redevelopment, which includes representatives, as I said, of operators, LHINs, municipalities, family councils and resident councils. My ministry is also in the process of conducting collaborative information sessions with stakeholders at locations across Ontario.

I also want to take a minute to give a shout-out to the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care who actually launched this process. Thank you so much, Minister Matthews.

I want to thank our stakeholders, as well as the folks in my ministry, the health capital branch, who have been truly burning the candle at both ends to make this a success.

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has stated that public policy will be based on science and evidence. With Bill 45, you have done a grave disservice to the people of Ontario, and it is contrary to both science and evidence.

Countless studies and research have proven that vaporizers are the most effective smoking cessation tool. They have been demonstrated to be up to a hundredfold more effective than nicotine patches, gums or inhalers.

Bill 45 is entitled the Making Healthier Choices Act, yet you are taking away the most effective choice available to those trying to quit smoking and to live a healthier lifestyle. Minister, will you consider this overwhelming evidence in favour of the use of vaporizers as a cessation tool, or would you rather keep these people addicted to tobacco?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. I want to assure the member opposite that our goal in Ontario is to help smokers stop smoking, because that's the one way we're going to reduce smoking rates in Ontario.

What we've done with Bill 45 is actually taken a middle-of-the-road, responsible approach, because we're not banning e-cigarettes. We're not banning e-cigarettes; they continue to be legal, but what we are trying to do is to make sure that people who don't smoke at all—our youth—don't start taking up e-cigarettes and electronic cigarettes. Mr. Speaker, what we've really done is taken a very responsible approach, balancing both sides: making sure that smokers have the opportunity to switch to vaping, if they should so want, but also making sure that those who don't smoke at all don't start vaping.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is not a middle-of-the-road approach; it is an extreme approach.

I can tell you the personal story of Brian Letts, who after smoking for 53 years finally quit smoking three years ago with a vaporizer. Or I can share with you the expert advice of Dr. Bhatnagar, a professor and practising cardiac surgeon with the University of Toronto. The professor has researched the use of vaporizers and has testified to how they are drastically reducing tobacco harm in our society.

Minister, in this case, the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly against your government's position. Will you listen to those who have finally been able to quit smoking and those in the medical and academic community who know that it is safe, and abandon your attack on people who want to quit smoking?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to assure the member opposite that his constituents can continue to vape cigarettes. And I respect Dr. Bhatnagar very much, but I also know that he runs an online vape store, so I just wanted to point that out.

I just want to continue to say that we believe that this is the right approach that our bill is taking. We've done wide stakeholder consultations and we look forward to this bill going through committee.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario's Wilderness Discovery camp in northwestern Ontario enables persons with disabilities and their families to enjoy time outdoors, thanks to their accessibility and to their facilities. However, the Handicapped Action Group, which operates this camp, will be forced to shut its doors unless the financial picture changes dramatically.

For years, the province of Ontario has been leasing this land to the camp, but the lease is up, and now the province wants to sell the land the camp is built on for more than this not-for-profit organization can afford. Will this government commit to working with the Handicapped Action Group on a financial solution that will keep Ontario's Wilderness Discovery camp's doors open?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. Nobody has been forced to do anything. I would think that the member would likely be aware of that. I've spent a great deal of time working with executive director David Shannon on this file, as has my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

To repeat, the Handicapped Action Group Inc. has not been forced to do anything. They have very clearly, in their press release that they put out just this week, made a decision operationally on how they're going to deal with this issue. It is not in any way a decision that is being forced upon them. They have decided on their own to take the resources that they have, that they fundraised—there's never been operational support for the facility from the government of Ontario, never.

They've decided to take their operational money that they use to fund that resort and create new programming. They're going to use that money to provide for their

clients. That's what they've decided to do. The choice is theirs. We support them in the direction that they've chosen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act states that our province will be accessible to the 1.8 million Ontarians with disabilities by 2025. But 10 years later, it seems that our province is abandoning Ontarians with disabilities by forcing this camp's closure.

The current cost of operating this camp is roughly \$200,000 a year, which has been raised primarily through donations and fundraising. Petitions from concerned families and campers have already exceeded 20,000 signatures.

Will this government do what it needs to do to save and support the Wilderness Discovery resort for the disabled before they sell this crown land to the highest bidder?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure would love to weigh in on this but this is a question that—with his indulgence—I'm going to keep.

This is not in any way a decision that is being forced upon this group. The indication from me, very clearly, to Executive Director Shannon was that we would be more than happy to work with him on a longer-term solution to do anything that we needed to do. We have had discussions already in that regard with the minister responsible, through Infrastructure Ontario, for the property. The organization has made their decision on their own to take the money that they fundraised—they always did; there was never operational support from the province of Ontario—and they've made a decision to offer new and different programming to their clients.

I would add as well on this issue that many of the clients who were receiving the benefit of that resort were not clients from Thunder Bay–Atikokan or even from northern Ontario. There were very few clients who received support from HAGI who were actually taking advantage of this particular facility. The new program is likely to offer them greater opportunities through HAGI, and I support—

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

A point of order from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd just like to make the House aware that the Ontario Dental Association will be playing the Legiskaters tonight at—what's the rink?

Mr. Todd Smith: Upper Canada College.

Mr. Bill Walker: Upper Canada College. We welcome everyone to come out. We need lots of fans.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning social housing. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I don't see them here yet, but the St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School's grades 7 and 8 were visiting today and I hope to see them in the gallery shortly.

Mrs. Gila Martow: My friend Stewart Kiff is here. Unfortunately, today I'm giving a statement—and he's here to hear the statement—in French on the Rwandan genocide. Thank you for visiting.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to introduce my friend Stewart Kiff, who happens to be my neighbour, who is also in the gallery on this side. Welcome, Stewart Kiff.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNIVERSAIRE DU GÉNOCIDE AU RWANDA

M^{me} Gila Martow: Monsieur le Président, nous commémorons un triste anniversaire, une série d'actes de cruauté qui a eu lieu il y a deux décennies : le génocide rwandais. Pendant une période d'infamie marquée par une brutalité sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'humanité, cette tragédie a entraîné la mort d'environ un million d'êtres humains, sans aucun motif autre que leur identité ethnique. Au cours des années qui ont suivi la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la mise en oeuvre d'une hiérarchie raciste basée sur une idéologie perverse y a semé la haine.

Cinq décennies plus tard, ces politiques se sont révélées comme un échec illustré par une perpétuelle escalade des conflits et des sentiments de haine. C'est tragiquement qu'en 1994, un plan vicieux et malin a déclenché et qu'une vague de violence fut commise à l'encontre des Tutsis, avec comme résultat des centaines de milliers de morts, des milliers de blessés, de disparus et de familles déplacées. Quelle horreur.

Malheureusement, de nos jours, nous sommes encore témoins de la montée d'un mouvement terroriste qui menace de répéter le niveau de violence qu'ont subie les Rwandais. Au nom de tous les Ontariens, je déclare sincèrement : nous ne nous défilerons jamais devant le mal.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Normally I would use my member's statement to highlight some of the great things that are happening in my riding. Unfortunately, I have to stand here today to highlight something pretty shameful that's going on in the riding of Essex.

There are five schools at risk that are in the PARC process, at risk of being closed in my area. They are

Western high school, Harrow high school, General Amherst, Kingsville high and Harrow public school.

Listening to the Minister of Education's answer today to some of our questions about the fact they're cutting consultation with the community really emphasizes how tragic and shameful this government's handling of our education system has been.

Western high school is one of the very few vocational schools in southwestern Ontario. You'd have to go all the way to Sarnia to find another vocational school that deals with some of the kids in our area who have high learning disabilities. It is a refuge; it's a safe haven. We heard that last night at the PARC consultation; we heard it from students, we heard it from parents, we heard it from faculty.

In the Windsor Star there was a report that we're looking for 300 skilled trade jobs right now out of Windsor. That's a place where those skilled trade jobs are trained, where students are trained and can enter the workforce, but the government is going to cut that school from our community. It's absolutely shameful and it's reprehensible.

Any conjecture on the Liberals' part to say that they're doing all they can and they've maintained stable funding is absolutely ludicrous. They have to fix this issue and have to fix the funding formula.

BUSINESS AWARDS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and acknowledge some remarkable citizens and business leaders in my riding of Halton. Over the past few weeks I've been fortunate to attend a series of chamber of commerce community awards in Oakville, Burlington and Milton. Each of these events had their own unique charm and personality. The events in Burlington and Oakville were focused on leaders in many different business fields, including not-for-profit, heritage, retail and conservation. The Milton awards also recognized community leaders, naming its Citizen of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards. All nominees and the 25 winners were people and businesses who went above and beyond to achieve something great for our community. All of the businesses continue to be the bedrock of our strong, local economies.

Among the winners were Burlington's Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Dave McSparran, Bottled Media. Oakville's Business Icon Award went to Pelmorex Media/The Weather Network. Retail Business of the Year in Burlington went to Christy's chocolates, and Milton's Lifetime Achievement Award winner was Rita Albin Curtis.

I can tell you that some of the acceptance speeches were really very inspirational. By celebrating hard work, ingenuity and passion, these galas are a vital part of keeping our community strong. They bring people together to celebrate the successes of our community. I'd like to congratulate all of the winners and nominees and I look forward to the incredible accomplishments we'll be seeing from Halton residents in the year to come.

SUZANNE LEARN

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize a dedicated constituent whose hard work and progressive vision have strengthened her community through the revival of the South River/Machar Agricultural Society and her participation with other volunteer organizations.

Suzanne Learn is the recipient of the 2015 Don Ivens Memorial Community Volunteer Award, presented by the South River Lions Club. She is the youngest-ever recipient of the award, and her community is thrilled to see her recognized for all her accomplishments.

Suzanne has been a member of the agricultural society board for five years and the president for the past four. She is the driving force behind events such as the annual 100-Mile Dinner, which showcases local farmers; the South River/Machar Taffy Pull; and reviving old events such as the fall agricultural fair.

In addition to her work with the agricultural society, Suzanne also volunteers with the United Church's Daisy Chain Drop-in Centre and with the South River Public School Student Advisory Committee, and has helped out with the Lions Club Canada Day celebration.

A mother of three young boys, Suzanne has actively engaged the younger generation to become involved in community events. Leading by example, she is inspiring volunteers of all ages to action. I'm pleased to see her dedication recognized and to share her accomplishments with you today. Congratulations, Suzanne.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as we've discussed, I will be asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence at the end of statements. I want to note the presence of Mr. Théophile Rwigimba and other members of the Rwandan diaspora who are here today.

I also want to note my colleague Ms. Martow and my colleague Madame Lalonde, who have spoken and will speak to this matter.

Today in this Legislature we mark the 21st anniversary of the launch of the genocide against the Tutsis of Rwanda. Last year, we solemnly recognized the event in this very chamber, an event recognized by the people of Rwanda and globally as "Kwibuka." Kwibuka is the Kinyarwanda word for "Remember."

As part of the past ceremonies of Kwibuka, survivors have spoken movingly of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide. As horrible as the experiences were for those who died during them or lived through them, they're even more painful because they were preventable. Rwandans died while the international community looked the other way or was actively complicit. The facts are staggering. As cited by MP Irwin Cotler, "in less than 100 days, beginning on April 7, 1994, one million Rwandans, mostly ethnic Tutsis, were slaughtered, victims of a government-orchestrated campaign of incendiary incitement and unspeakable violence."

1510

Members of the Rwandan community are here with us today to commemorate this sombre occasion, to remind us that terrible wrongs can arise out of intolerance, hatred and racism.

I ask this House for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to commemorate all those who were lost and to carry forward the memory of what they went through so we can avoid such genocides in the future.

ANNIVERSAIRE DU GÉNOCIDE
AU RWANDA

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN
GENOCIDE

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir de discuter aujourd'hui, de faire une déclaration sur ce sujet.

En 1994 un génocide a été perpétré contre les Tutsis au Rwanda. Il a été qualifié parmi les plus rapides et les plus odieux de l'histoire de l'humanité. Le génocide reste toujours dans la mémoire des Rwandais. Entre 800 000 et un million de personnes—enfants, femmes et hommes—ont été tuées sur une courte période. Ceci représente plus de 80 % de la population tutsie qui a été tuée.

The memory of these terrible events lingers today.

Le peuple rwandais est un peuple qui partage une même histoire, une langue, une religion et une culture depuis des siècles. Ce génocide ne fut pas le fruit du hasard. Ce sont les divisions ethniques qui ont été entretenues et renforcées, d'où cette terrible tragédie humaine.

April 7 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda.

Nos pensées dans ce temps de commémoration sont adressées au peuple rwandais, aux survivantes et aux survivants. Les victimes seront toujours au sein de nos pensées et ne seront jamais oubliées.

Que le monde entier se lève ensemble aujourd'hui pour dire : plus jamais.

Please stand with the international community to say: Never again.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: The cost of hydro continues to escalate beyond belief. Municipalities all across the province, including those in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, are extremely frustrated with Ontario's skyrocketing rates which have tripled since the Liberals came into power in 2003. These unaffordable rates are a product of the smart meter fiasco, gas plant scandals and, the mother of all energy disasters, the Green Energy Act.

Every day our municipal partners hear from residents who find themselves in desperate situations. Average Ontarians have to choose between filling up the car, buying groceries or paying their hydro bill. The exorbi-

tant cost of electricity is also driving business to consider leaving Ontario.

The township of Madawaska Valley in my riding is one of many municipalities that has fallen victim to the Liberals' failed energy policies, making it hard for residents and businesses to afford hydro and to ultimately thrive and prosper.

In response to these outrageous rates, the council of the township of Madawaska Valley has passed a resolution that calls on the Premier to mitigate current rates and prevent any further rate increases from being implemented. The township of Admaston/Bromley has passed a similar resolution.

It's an impossible situation for municipalities because it's the provincial policies that are making hydro unaffordable.

Minister, this is not just a plea from the official opposition. It crosses all political lines and comes from all levels of government. This is unaffordable, unsustainable, and you have got to change course.

VAISAKHI

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I stand in this House to speak on the festival of Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi is a harvest festival traditionally celebrated by farming communities. It symbolizes the changing of the seasons and the coming of spring. Falling in the middle of April, it marks the harvest of winter crops. The festival is celebrated as a thanksgiving day by the farmers to pay tribute to a successful harvest.

Vaisakhi is an important day for the Sikh religion. On this day in 1699, as thousands of Sikhs gathered at Anandpur Sahib to celebrate the festival of Vaisakhi, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Sikh guru, laid the foundations of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith.

On this day, the surname Singh was created to remove all barriers of a caste system which allowed people to be distinguished or segregated based on a surname. A social revolution which promoted equality had begun, one which judges no person based on their gender, race, religion or colour.

Sikhism's teachings of commitment to justice and equality are values that are not only cherished by members of the Sikh community, but are the values shared by all Canadians.

The festival of Vaisakhi also includes processions otherwise known as the Nagar Kirtan, or the Khalsa Day Parade.

I would like to wish all of those celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi. I would also like to encourage all members of the House to join in celebrations in their ridings which will be held all over Ontario in the coming weeks.

FLOYD SINTON

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I rise today in memory of a beloved community leader and business owner from Craighurst who passed away on March 18. Floyd Sinton

was a man who dedicated his life to his family and the families in his community.

I first met Floyd and his wonderful wife, Barb, at a Halloween costume party. They were the life the party. As an educator I later dealt with Floyd and Barb as they picked up and dropped off students at Forest Hill school in Midhurst. Not only did they transport our students with care, compassion and humour, things needed by the school would suddenly appear after speaking to them. As we debated Bill 31, I often thought of him when we talked about school buses. The safety of those children was paramount to the Sintons.

At the age of 16, Floyd was working with his dad at their family-owned service station in Craighurst. It was at that time that Floyd borrowed \$900 from his father to buy a 20-passenger bus. From this one bus, Floyd started his business and began transporting students daily to and from Barrie. The business grew from that one route to a company with 500 employees servicing the communities of Collingwood and Newmarket, with various contracts with local school boards, which was run by their late son, Stan.

Floyd, Barb and Stan also consistently donated time, money and resources to many local organizations. Floyd was a remarkable man who gave much to his community, his family and his friends. He will be sorely missed.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Toronto–Danforth has asked for unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the Rwandan genocide.

Is there consent? Agreed.

Would everyone join me in standing for a moment of silence?

The House observed a moment's silence.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader says we have unanimous consent to move a motion on the Standing Committee on General Government. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2015, for the purpose of public hearings on 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.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2015, for the purpose of public hearings on 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. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents’ physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal.”

I thank you very much for the time to present this petition, and I affix my signature, as I agree with it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislature...:

“Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and ... Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

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

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

Speaker, I fully agree with this petition, and I will affix my name to it and give it to Joshua to take up to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

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

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

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

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

Speaker, I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Joshua.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Thomas.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélina: I have this petition that comes to me from Dianne Luttrell. She is from Garson, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

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

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Afyah to bring it to the Clerk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it’s entitled

“Population-based legal services funding.” It reads as follows:

“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 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 allocated funds ... 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'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to send it down with page Cailyn.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: These signatures are addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

“Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect.”

LYME DISEASE

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease

consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year.”

I support this petition and present it to page Samantha to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

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

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

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“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Misha to bring forward.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is

responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

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

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I fully agree, will assign my name and give it to Luca to bring up to the desk.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly that, in aggregate, will average out with the last one to make them both reasonable-sized petitions.

"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 ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... 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

"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

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education...;

"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 ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and leave it with page Joshua.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. I wonder if there is any room for petition signatures after that lengthy one.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act ... is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came to me from M. Marc Chartrand, who is one of my constituents in Val Caron, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Thomas to bring it to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Nickel Belt. The time allotted for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me first say that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Trinity–Spadina, Ottawa–Orléans and Durham.

In the few minutes that I have to talk about this—it is so important. It's important for rural Ontario. It's important for all of us in Ontario. As times change, we recognize that certain species don't belong in certain areas, and because they are there they create an enormous amount of damage and disturb the ecosystem that we enjoy.

Let's just review a little bit what Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act, is doing. This has been reintroduced—it's been around the bend once. The government is taking action to address the serious threat of invasive species to Ontario's economy and to our natural environment. In February, our government first introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act and reintroduced this proposed legislation on November 5, 2014. If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation.

Let's look at some of the threats if we don't do this. Invasive species impact the life of every Ontarian, as I've said in the past, and the cost to the Ontario economy is tens of millions of dollars each year. There are jobs at risk in the forestry industry, in the commercial and recreational fishing industries, not to mention tourism.

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Let's look at some of the impacts of some of the invasive species that already exist in Ontario. I'm sure most of us in this chamber have heard this before.

Let's look at zebra mussels. They are famous for clogging the intake pipes of municipal water supplies and hydroelectric companies—therefore, with the enjoyment of our lakes and rivers. It's estimated that zebra mussels are costing the province some \$75 million to \$90 million each and every year to manage—and make sure that these pipes stay free.

The other invasive species that we know is here already is the ruffe. This species can seriously damage native sport fish populations such as yellow perch—I

know my seatmate is an avid fisherman—by directly competing for food and habitat or through heavy predation of native sport fish eggs. Ruffe can very quickly become the most dominant fish in our local areas because of their rapid reproduction and growth rates. This puts pressure on native species and contributes to their decline.

Those are just a couple of species that we have here already interfering with our ecological system.

Let's talk a little bit about species that are not here yet but which we're certainly worried are going to be here.

The mountain pine beetle is in western Canada.

Ms. Soo Wong: Bad news.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is bad news, my colleague here tells me, and it is. It's an insect responsible for destroying millions of hectares of pine trees in British Columbia—that's one of their main industries, forestry—increasing the risk of large fires with dead and dying trees creating landscapes of highly flammable material; and loss of wildlife during one of these fires. They degrade the overall visual quality of the forest. It's not a forest anymore.

The Asian carp has already migrated through the US in many waterways.

These are just the types of things, as legislators in this House, we need to deal with to, frankly, look after our future.

I would encourage, as we debate Bill 37, that we get it passed through second reading, get it to committee, and let's refine it because it's something that we really, really need.

Speaker, with that, I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing on with debate, I recognize the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my honour and my personal interest, actually, to debate this bill. As many of my friends and colleagues know, I'm a sports fisherman. I have—

Applause.

Mr. Han Dong: There you go, Percy.

I have an aluminum fishing boat. I have two young kids. You know how dedicated I am. Every time I go out, I have to squeeze a little bit of time to go out and provide some explanation to my wife and family. So this bill is very important to me.

It speaks to prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province. To me, early detection and response is key, because, as a fisherman, I've seen the changes in the water. I pay attention to small changes.

I have noticed in the lake that I fish that the introduction of zebra mussels, for example, really clears out the lake and changes the entire ecosystem, the species in the water; the abundance of, for example, walleyes. That species in particular is under a lot of threat because of these invasive species such as zebra mussels.

Gobies eat up all the eggs after spawns.

I have noticed a tremendous reduction in some of the lakes I've enjoyed fishing in over the years. We've got to do something about that.

Asian carp: I'm sure some of the members here—and I've actually heard that from my constituency who watched some of the YouTube clips on how invasive and how dangerous they could be, especially in small ponds and small rivers. They can grow huge, and they respond to any splashing and can jump and seriously threaten the participants of various water sports.

I look at the economic impact these invasive species will have on our rural communities which heavily depend on tourism. Whether it's the Americans or whether it's recreational fishermen across the world, they come to Canada, they come to Ontario, to enjoy the natural resources we have to offer here. Keep in mind, we're in competition with other jurisdictions.

I understand that if this bill is passed, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. That puts us in a very competitive position when it comes to tourism and competing with the rest of the country. So I am extremely pleased to debate on this bill, and I look forward to more debate from my colleagues and hopefully from across the floor. I'm happy to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, I now recognize the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 36, the Invasive Species Act. As many of you know, I am passionate about our environment and our ecosystem.

We are blessed with diverse nature and some of the world's most scenic land and species, and it is important that we protect our critters for now and the future. The protection of our environment and our ecosystem is something this government takes seriously. If passed, Bill 36 will provide a strong legislative framework to better prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species.

My riding of Ottawa–Orléans borders on the Ottawa River. It is important that the House passes this bill so we can have stronger tools to protect the Ottawa River. One invasive species, the European water chestnut, has been found in the Ottawa River, specifically in Chute-à-Blondeau's Voyageur national park. Invasive species are a major concern for the Ottawa River.

Beyond the European water chestnut, the Asian carp, which has not yet arrived in Ontario, could have a serious impact on the Great Lakes and many rivers. The Asian carp, which is currently in many US waterways, must be stopped before entering the Great Lakes and our waterways. If the Asian carp becomes established in Ontario, they could potentially eat the food supply that our native fish depend on and crowd them out of their habitats.

Bill 36 addresses the serious concern that invasive species pose to Ontario's nature and economy. It is estimated that invasive species cost both the US and Canada a combined \$500 billion. Invasive species affect our economy, our wildlife and our ecosystems.

I am proud that Ontario is creating a specific invasive species tool to combat this serious problem. This bill

enhances Ontario's ability to react to the problem of invasive species and would be the first stand-alone legislation in Canada to do this.

Ottawa–Orléans is home to one of Ottawa's most scenic islands, a natural gem that I encourage you to visit whenever you visit Ottawa: our dearest Petrie Island. The island is a significant area of natural and scientific interest, as well as being a beautiful place to spend time. Petrie Island has hiking trails, beach volleyball, kayaking and a nature centre. The island even hosts ice fishing in the winter.

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The protection of Petrie Island and the Ottawa River is something I am excited to support, and Bill 36 has the tools to protect the island. Petrie Island is home to wetlands, which provide a home to wildlife, improve the water quality of the river and provide families and people alike with the beautiful sights and scenery of nature. The wetlands of Petrie Island are home to some of the highest quality wetlands. We must continue to protect the wetlands for our wildlife. This is exactly what Bill 36 will do.

The rusty crayfish is an invasive species that has become a problem to the native species of crayfish in the wetlands of Petrie Island. The rusty crayfish compete for food with the native crayfish. In many circumstances, the rusty crayfish actually win in this competition. We recognize the need to stop this type of fish from destroying the native species of crayfish at Petrie Island and across Ontario. That is why I am proud to stand up and support Bill 36, the Invasive Species Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans. Continuing along, I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my colleagues who have spoken to this bill. It's a pleasure for me to add my two cents' worth to this bill. I am glad to be speaking to the Invasive Species Act today. We are talking about a very pressing concern for our natural sustainability today, one that has implications beyond rural and forested areas. The threat of invasive species is broad-sweeping, and the prevention of the spread of invasive species is of paramount importance. Once they're here, they're very difficult to be rid of, and it is very difficult to reverse their influence.

Expanding the minister's power to battle invasive species is something I think we should all support and encourage. Our forests and waterways are vital to our success as a province and as a country in more ways than as countable resources. They're important for communities and characterize the most beautiful and prosperous parts of our great province.

Coming from Clarington, and also representing the municipalities of Scugog and Uxbridge, I know very well the influence of beautiful and accessible forests, parks and natural spaces on those who are lucky enough to live in communities that house them. But invasive species threaten this balance. They threaten to invade our pine trees, eradicate our maples, sap our waterways of their

diversity and out-compete our native plant life. In the grand sense of things, they threaten our way of life and the balance that maintains our environment.

There are currently a plethora of provincial and federal acts that create a patchwork of legislation that tries to combat the spread of invasive species. In their conflicting implementation, they create holes where they may fail to achieve our preventive and proactive goals. None of this existing legislation has the specificity that is needed to effectively ensure that Ontario's native species are protected from damaging competition and to keep the problem from spreading. What we need is a framework to ensure that we respond quickly and efficiently to new threats, that we're better able to detect when a threat may be impending, and that can enable us to quickly come up with a plan to eradicate any species that threaten our native flora and fauna.

This legislation will ensure that we as a government have those abilities. We would be able to respond more quickly, to make decisions earlier and to ensure that invasive species do not have the opportunity to establish themselves in Ontario. For those who may wish to trade in dangerous species, we would have the ability to impose sanctions and prohibitions, and we would have the ability to promote compliance through inspection and enforcement. These abilities are supported by many groups and sustainability advocates, including the anglers and hunters, the Invasive Species Centre and Ducks Unlimited Canada—a ringing endorsement of necessary legislation.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to encourage the passage of this bill today, and to speak on behalf of the residents of Durham when I say that the protection of our natural resources is incredibly important, from the Ganaraska Forest to Darlington Provincial Park, to the shores of Lake Scugog, the Glen Major Forest and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes on my way up to Peterborough I see signs talking about the emerald ash borer, which is in the riding of my colleague from Peterborough. The emerald ash borer was first found in Canada in Windsor, Ontario, in 2002. Since then, the beetle has spread across much of southwestern Ontario, Sault Ste. Marie and the Ottawa area. Once infested, the mortality of ash trees is nearly 100%.

Ontario municipalities have spent over \$71 million managing the beetle, and over the next 10 years plan to spend an additional \$240 million. The beetle is a significant threat to our forestry. That's just one single instance of what these insects can do to our forestry, to our communities and to the beauty of Ontario and the beauty of this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, is it a point of order?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm so sorry. I think I referred to this bill as 36, and it was 37, so I would just like to clarify. Sorry for that.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Correct your record.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I correct my record. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That is a point of order, and you are allowed to correct your record. Thank you for doing so.

Comments and questions.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. I'm pleased to bring some remarks in reaction to the speed debating that we saw on the other side of the House. We had four members who used up 18 minutes to talk about a very important bill; that's Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

This is important to all corners of the province of Ontario. I come from Prince Edward–Hastings, and we have the beautiful Bay of Quinte, one of the great fishing destinations in Ontario, world-famous for its walleye fishing. I know they've had a serious problem for the last 20 years in the Bay of Quinte with an invasive species called the zebra mussel.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West was the first amongst the Liberal members here this afternoon to speak on the bill, and he did acknowledge the fact that the zebra mussel probably came in through the St. Lawrence Seaway back in the mid-1980s, at the bottom of a freighter on its way into Lake Ontario. It's been there ever since, and it's been causing a lot of problems. It's an invasive species that clogs water pipes that come to and from our water treatment plants and our power plants, and it creates a problem there. It damages our harbours, it damages the boats that dock at our marinas and it does serious damage to a world-class fishery. It changes the environment. That's just one example, at the south end of my riding.

At the north end of my riding—I believe it was perhaps the member from Durham, who just spoke, who mentioned the fact about the beetles and the damage that they're doing to our forestry sector. There are all kinds of examples of these invasive species.

This bill takes some steps that are much-needed to guard against invasive species, but this bill doesn't take a preventive approach. That's one of the areas that we can improve on when we get this bill to committee, but for starters, Bill 37 is a step in the right direction. The Invasive Species Act will get support from the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand in place today and to make reference to the various members of the Liberal caucus who've spoken on the need for this bill. I agree. I remember, back in the 1970s or before, when we talked about the sea lamprey getting into the Great Lakes, that eel, that sucker that was destroying so many good fish. That was followed by the spiny water flea, the goby, the round goby, zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, and the emerald ash borer. You can't tell me much about the emerald ash borer; I was on city council when we spent millions of dollars trying to eradicate it in our area and trying to replace so many ash trees that we

lost. Phragmites and now the threat of Asian carp getting into the Great Lakes—major problems.

1600

Currently we have a patchwork of about 20 federal and provincial bills dealing with invasive species. This bill, at least, will consolidate the Ontario bills, the provincial bills, into one and under one ministry; that is long overdue.

I guess the thing that troubles me about the bill is that, in order for it to be effective, you will need to hire more inspectors. You will need to send people out to monitor the situation and to do research. Instead, the ministry is one of the many under this government that is being cut 6% a year for the next three years. So how are we ever going to monitor, police and enforce this new bill without the people to do it? You can't bring in something like this and expect the current staff to do it, because there's so much work that needs to be done, so many more areas and jobs and jurisdictions that need to be monitored and researched. There's just no money on the table for it.

So I support the bill, and wish them luck in making it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Good afternoon. It's a pleasure for me to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

A number of my colleagues on this side of the House and some colleagues on the other side have talked about some of the invasive species that are currently here in Ontario, including the zebra mussels and the emerald ash borer, which I may talk about later if I have a bit of time. But we've also talked about the ones that are not yet in Ontario; that is of great, great concern to myself, Mr. Speaker.

There has been some discussion of federal and provincial acts that govern invasive species, but they're not really designed for that. I'll just outline a couple of them. The Canada Shipping Act is federal, and it manages the discharge of ballast water. The Plant Diseases Act is a provincial act that bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which could include an invasive insect or pathogen. The Public Lands Act is provincial, and it allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines. But what's important is that this proposed legislation is going to help address some of those legislative gaps that currently exist, as none of these laws actually deal specifically and directly with invasive species.

Some of the key elements of the act, that the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has put forward, would help the government by providing the powers to intervene earlier so invasive species do not become established here in Ontario. It would also give the government the tools to prohibit activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species, but it would also enable rapid response actions to address urgent threats.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke about his involvement in 2002 with regard to the emerald ash

borer. I can tell you, it has moved completely across the province into Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. As a matter of fact, we heat with wood in the winter now, and I was fortunate enough to have good ash trees, but unfortunately invasive species had killed them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to add my comments to this debate, although I have already spoken to this bill for about an hour. I do know that the member across the way just mentioned the emerald ash borer, which was a terrible plight to many of the forests, especially down in the Essex area and probably your area too, Speaker.

The concerns we do have with this bill that the government has yet to address—and I kind of wish they would give their members a little more time than two minutes to speak on this bill, then they could actually have a fleshed-out debate, where they could actually answer our questions that we've brought forward.

But step 1 is: This government and this new bill will allow the MNR to decide if they are allowed to enter your property and clear-cut your forest, if they think the emerald ash borer is coming on. At the end of the day, after they clear-cut your forest on your own property—without discussing it with the landowner, because this bill says you don't have to—they can just pass the bill on to the landowner and say, "Now you have to pay for it." I think that's a little risky. My say is that we're moving from the Legislature into a bureaucracy which now is given the ability to enter anybody's property, do what they want to that property and then make you pay for it. I think that's dangerous ground, and I'd love to have someone from the government discuss that, but obviously they're not interested in having a debate; they are interested in rushing this bill through. I'd rather we do it slowly, do it right, and maybe talk about an amendment to fix this problem, because I don't know about you, but my constituents aren't happy with that part of the bill.

There are other parts of the bill, which I did talk about in my hour debate, that are concerns of mine. I have yet to hear them talk about maybe making this bill a little more preventative. This bill is reactive; we wait until the invasive species are in our province and then we deal with them. Why not deal with them before they get here? Why don't we prevent them from entering our province?

They don't want to have this discussion. They would rather rush through their speakers and rush through the bill, and they are going to mess things up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for final comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Perfect, Speaker. Practice makes perfect.

First of all, I want to thank all the members—the members from Prince Edward–Hastings, Windsor–Tecumseh, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Elgin–Middlesex–London—for responding to our 20-minute contribution towards the bill.

A couple of things. First, I'm sure most of you know that the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is my

neighbour to the east. We cross jurisdictions in a lot of places. One of the things that people ask me when I'm in that middle ground is, "Do you folks agree on things at Queen's Park?", because obviously, if they watch the House, we seldom agree on anything. Today, I must say that we do agree on something, so it gives me something I'll bring back to the residents.

As far as the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London's comment about how we need to speak longer on this, the opportunity is here. This is not a closure motion; it's to debate. So I hope everybody gets to do that, to add to the debate. I'm glad to hear that generally we all support this, so I think we can make it happen.

Speaker, in the last less than a minute, I didn't mention during my speaking points that when it comes to looking after costs for these things—in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, in a portion of the Trent River, we had what we called a water soldier, which is an invasive species of plant that just destroys some of the habitat, some of the boating opportunities. I can thank the Ministry of Natural Resources. It had been growing for about two years and it was really, really spreading. Just last summer, through no cost to the local residents, the Ministry of Natural Resources looked after this. Biologists found that with proper treatment—I'm not sure if we eradicated it all, but 99% is gone. So I think when issues arise, we're there as a government to try to deal with it.

Again, thank you for the support from all sides of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the chance to address Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. When this legislation is passed, as we know, Ontario would end up being the first and only province to have stand-alone legislation with respect to invasive species. This would be an admirable accomplishment, given the tremendous problems we've been hearing about during debate here in the Legislature, whether it's phragmites or Asian carp or the emerald ash borer—it's in our bush now. I won't be able to cut up those trees fast enough as they die.

But we don't want this to be merely warm, fuzzy, feel-good legislation that really doesn't accomplish anything, given the task at hand. Speaking with our critic, it's very important that this goes to committee, where we can hear from outdoors men and women, farmers, people who work in the field who have studied this very, very complex issue and the variety of animal and plant species that are involved and lumped under the title "invasive species."

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It's got to have some teeth. It's got to be designed to truly tackle some of the problems but not take an easy way out. There is concern among landowners that they would be targeted and held responsible if they end up unwittingly harbouring some of these species, as Jeff Yurek, our MNR critic, advocates.

Prevention is also so important in having a comprehensive approach to what is a set of very serious problems across the province.

I am guilty. I'm one of those landowners who harbours invasive species, not necessarily because I want to. Some have arrived—some have arrived courtesy of my wife, actually; she picked up stuff at a landscaper's a number of years ago. She threw about a dozen goldfish in our pond; now we've got about 600 goldfish in there. However, that provides habitat for bittern and great blue herons. We've got a snapping turtle down there. Let me think now, there are a few other species that just love goldfish—kingfishers, for example. When you see a kingfisher with a goldfish, it looks like he's got a gigantic orange bill. That's the goldfish going down into the gullet.

I'll just relate my personal battle over a number of years with phragmites. This is the Norfolk reed, the pampas grass. It's very high grass that replaces cattails, for example. We see them in the ditches. They first arrived down south of Windsor a number of years ago and spread their way on up through. If you drive down Highway 402 down to Sarnia, for example—courtesy of our Ministry of Transportation, we now have phragmites stretching across the province of Ontario. I don't know whether Bob Bailey had anything to do with that but it's something. We all work on some approaches to that. This is an invasive species that's spread along government land.

They're hard to kill. They spread through the seeds; they spread through the roots. You can dig out your pond and dump it somewhere in a ravine, and then you've got phragmites down through your ravine. I certainly know that on my farm.

When these non-native plants are introduced and established, it obviously disrupts the established ecosystem. It forces out the native species, and whenever you have a decrease in the native species, you have less diversity, less biodiversity. This, in turn, means less food and shelter for wildlife that have been dependent on those native plants, certainly since the last ice age, in this part of the world. It's a ripple effect, and it cascades through the whole ecosystem.

The challenge when they arrive is that there aren't any native species that can serve as predation or control. In the ecosystem they left, over thousands of years, there would have been natural controls: insects, animals, diseases, fungus—things like that that act as a control.

In my battle with phragmites in my pond, early on, I would cut them down in the winter. I would cut them down in the summer. Sometimes I would shave them off on the ice in the winter, and then I fell through one day, and there goes my BlackBerry. If you ever break through the ice in the winter, forget about your BlackBerry. I had my BlackBerry with me just in case I did fall through, so I could use my phone, but that was the first thing to go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're glad you made it back.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I don't even remember climbing out but I got out quite rapidly.

There's been some success in knocking them down and spraying them with glyphosate, or Roundup. Roundup is obviously a very effective weed control. There are restrictions: You don't spray Roundup over water. I've used a few techniques myself using a very large paint roller to wick the leaves, without any product going in the water, but I'm sure that's illegal as well, but I have had some good success using that technique.

We've got to work on some practical techniques beyond this legislation to help landowners, farmers, people to control these kinds of things because MNR and MTO staff really don't have the resources to get out there and right the balance with so many of these particular products.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: MPP Bailey mentioned goats. I used to have a number of goats. I'll never do that again. I put them along the edges of the pond and I found that you can give goats just about anything, the finest alfalfa and clover and grain, but if they see some phragmites, these dry, ugly leaves, they'll go for the phragmites. Goats love phragmites. Maybe we'll put thousands and thousands of goats along Highway 402. Start at Bob Bailey's house and work our way up to London and have a controlled experiment, opportunities for roadkill. There are all kinds of things that could happen there.

Regulation is so important. We hoped some more good ideas, again, would come out through committee, but I do see the emphasis here is going to put the weight on the shoulders of landowners. Where are the tools? Where are the techniques for landowners to better deal with these kinds of issues?

So the roads alone, I think, are one place to start with phragmites.

As I've mentioned, MPPs Bob Bailey, Jeff Yurek—Monte McNaughton has done some work on this and put forward an idea. We've just taken the common milkweed off the noxious weeds act—that's noxious; not obnoxious, by the way—so there's a vacancy. Let's characterize phragmites as a noxious weed.

I'll go back a few years ago to what I consider some success dealing with purple loosestrife. There doesn't seem to be so much of a worry now with that particular invasive plant; it was tackled at the time. There was collaboration with OFAH, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the ministry, MNR. Crews descended on the worst concentration. Volunteers were involved. They were manually pulling them out of the ground. I obviously don't see similar initiatives with phragmites. Forget about trying to pull them out of the ground; you almost need a backhoe to get those roots out. I know that from personal experience.

Warrantless entry: I have concerns with respect to the provisions contained in this act allowing entry on land without a warrant. Obviously, I'm all for controlling these species, but I have never favoured warrantless entry in any of the pieces of environmental legislation that this government has brought forward over the last dozen years.

I can see a case to be made, and I've talked to OFAH about this, with respect to the Asian carp. You are dealing with some pretty tough cookies who bring these carp in for food. Many of them get arrested, and they pay very large fines.

So maybe we need some heavy-duty measures, but I don't want us to go overboard on the enforcement end of it; hence, the importance of prevention, promotion and education to mobilize those who know a little bit about the outdoors, to deal with so many of these plants and animals.

Again, with the trucking companies that bring in the Asian carp, my recommendation—I think the federal government has picked up on this—has always been to eviscerate the fish before they cross the border; to gut them, cut their heads off. The same applies in the United States or between states, and I have recommended that south of the border as well.

Again, I think if, say, the owner of a wetland—say it's five acres, much bigger than my pond—to what extent would they be responsible for spending thousands of dollars to remove phragmites? It's something that has to be discussed. There's obviously not a one-size-fits-all approach to this.

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The Long Point wetlands down my way are a very significant flyway for migrating waterfowl. My sister and brother-in-law have managed a duck hunting company down there for many years. My father worked for that company. I recall, going back to the 1960s, just thousands and thousands of acres of very healthy duck habitat, cattail habitat. Much of that now is being taken over by phragmites. A lot more research is needed, certainly, in that area because, you know, what are we left with? A monoculture in many cases, because this particular plant is so aggressive.

There's a lady in my riding, Janice Gilbert. She's an independent researcher, part of a phragmites working group. They advocate adding that species to the noxious weed list, as we have seen other weeds added over the years. I think MPP Yurek is doing some work on that, and MPP Monte McNaughton, who is here, pushed for adding phragmites to that list. It still hasn't happened.

The OFAH supports that group. The group has six priorities for the phragmites:

(1) A concerted effort to control along roads and agricultural drainage ditches, the municipal drains in Ontario.

(2) Proper herbicides available for over water; I have discussed that.

(3) Have the provincial government initiate and support an effective public education campaign which includes adding phragmites australis to the noxious weed list.

(4) We need sufficient dedicated funds committed from both the federal and provincial governments. We need a 10-year planning window; we have to fund 10 years of work.

(5) A locally driven effort calling on support from all three levels of government.

(6) And, overarching, we need a plan. We need a management plan for phragmites, something that would do as well for so many other species.

The periwinkle have survived the winter very well. They did a little better than the ivy on my black locust. All these species are invasive. I see all of these when I open the front door of my house. As I've made mention before, there's a beautiful, gigantic maple in front of Queen's Park when you walk out the front door. It's a Norway maple. Nothing grows underneath it other than a bit of grass. It's an invasive species, and there's one probably just a hundred feet from the front door here.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let's get a chainsaw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think maybe we could deal with that, but that would be very politically hard to do. But, you know, in the ravines in Toronto there are millions and millions of Norway maple, and again, something could be done about that.

The damage that we're talking about here is not just ecological; it's financial. Estimates are that invasive alien species have a \$7.5-billion impact on our forest industry and on agriculture. The impact on ecosystems, as we've been discussing, is often not only severe but irreversible, and could be responsible for as much as 24% of the decline of species at risk across Canada.

I wanted to talk about so many of the plants. Plants can be boring for some people, but they don't get the attention that they should—obviously a very important part of so many species' food chains. I did mention Asian carp. It's become a bit of a media star over the last few years: the Asians, the silvers, that jump out of streams when there's vibration or noise, say, from an outdoor motor. Again, if those things ever got into the Great Lakes, that would be devastating. I'm not necessarily worried about killer whales getting into Lake Erie. I don't think that's going to be an issue. We spend so much time talking about killer whales, but of course—the Mississippi River and the Missouri system. What kind of impact would that have on Ontario's \$7-billion sport fishing industry, let alone our commercial fishing—that's a \$234-million industry—our tourism industry, our restaurant industry? At so many of the great restaurants along Lake Erie, for example, you can get some fantastic perch dinners; certainly, if you go into towns like Port Dover and Port Stanley—and the Lancaster perch down in eastern Ontario.

Again, I talked about gutting Asian carp as they come in. The federal government has taken the initiative on this. I thought maybe in Ontario we would see a bigger push from the province. Much of the concern is the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. There's a multi-billion dollar proposal to deal with that. It's almost politically not possible and would take decades to accomplish, but I certainly laud the American people and their federal government for the initiatives they've taken on that. They are making some changes just downstream from Chicago and improving their technology as far as experimenting beyond electrocution and dealing with any movement of these fish north, up into Lake Michigan.

Another real area of concern was Eagle Marsh, near Fort Wayne, Indiana, which was kind of a link between the Mississippi watershed and the Great Lakes watershed. They did have a steel-link fence there, which really wasn't effective, and they now, as I understand it, have dredged or built a berm separating the two waterways. They built an earthen berm across that marsh. I certainly give the United States credit for going beyond rules and regulations and putting some money in and taking some direct action that benefits all of us on this side of the border.

So there are, obviously, some signs of progress. The private sector has kicked in. Commercial fishermen Illinois—way have removed something like three million pounds of Asian carp over the last five years. That's a short-term measure, obviously.

I like to think that there are some chefs—I talked to people down in Louisiana, at these fantastic restaurants in Baton Rouge. They can cook just about anything that comes out of the water, and there's some potential for them to put Asian carp on the dinner plate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening and trying to make some notes and trying to do some research at the same time, listening very intently to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

He talked about the emerald ash borer. I've mentioned previously in this House that we in Windsor and Essex county were hit particularly hard. We warned other communities in Ontario that this thing was coming, and indeed, it is spreading to the ash trees right across the province. We had beautiful, tree-lined boulevards—unfortunately, ash trees. We had a lot of ash trees around our public parks. If you think of the damage that a dead tree—because these trees certainly die; in a windstorm or if anything hits them, they come down. They come down on houses and vehicles. We were really nervous, especially around the sports fields, that there would be children playing out there or walking down the sidewalk and the trees would come down. So our municipality spent millions of dollars taking these trees down before something really bad happened.

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The thing about losing a tree: Trees are the lungs of the earth. They clean our air. When you live in a community, as I do, where the prevailing winds blow all that pollution from the coal-burning power plants in the American states that border the Great Lakes, we need all the lungs that we can get, all the trees that we can plant and replant to make up for all the ash trees that we lost. It got very expensive for us.

It's the same with phragmites now. People look at the phragmites, and they think it's the tall prairie grasses that used to be all over Ontario. But no, it's an invasive species. People actually use it as a decorative grass in their backyard. They don't know it's going to take over the entire backyard. We have to always keep an eye on such things, Speaker.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the members who spoke before me, the members from Haldimand–Norfolk and Windsor–Tecumseh.

I want to tell you that I'm really pleased to stand up today and speak about Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I think this is a very important piece of legislation for our environment and also for our future. What it does is, it allows the province to take an active role in now stopping new invasive species from taking hold in our province.

This is really about protecting our plant life and our environment and making sure that it's there for our children and for generations to come. This bill addresses the serious threat of invasive species and how they influence and impact our province's economy and our natural environment.

If passed, this bit of legislation would make Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada—think about it, the first jurisdiction in Canada—with stand-alone invasive species legislation. This will make our province and the residents in this province really the leaders when it comes to protecting our environment from invasive species. I think this is exactly the kind of role that our province should be taking.

Invasive species, as you all know, impact the lives of everyone in Ontario. In my riding of Halton, it's really the phragmites that you can see. When you drive down any country road—and you're nodding your head, so I know you know this—you can see them cropping up everywhere. They're not just cropping up; they are actually choking out the rest of the plant life in the area, and they are growing to be huge. They are towering over me and over all the other plant life around.

Invasive species, as we all know, cost Ontario tens of millions of dollars a year. We can't afford this, and our children can't afford this. This legislation will give our province the power to intervene early and ensure that invasive species don't take hold in our countryside and in our environment. I think this is an extremely important piece of legislation that will benefit our environment, our society and our children for years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I want to rise and comment on the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's comments about invasive species, whether it's the Asian carp or any of the other invasive species that we're certainly concerned about here in Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The Liberal government is an invasive species.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My colleague here has got some other comments about some invasive species, but I won't add to that.

The phragmites issue: I know I have to deal with it. There's a lot of it, as the member from Haldimand–Norfolk said, in southwestern Ontario. All you have to do is travel the 401 or any of the 400-series highways and you can see it there. We have a pond in behind our

backyard, and it's quite prevalent there along both shores of the pond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You've got to get a goat.

Mr. Robert Bailey: So I'm going to take the advice of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I've got a goat already lined up. I've talked to a buddy of mine, and he's going to lend me a goat. But I was also advised by other people who know agriculture very well—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just get Dion Phaneuf and Phil Kessel. We'll make goats out of them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Ha, yes.

They said, "Make sure you get a female goat; don't get a billy goat, because the people uptown will know you've got a goat." Apparently, there's a certain odour about them, and it's quite prevalent. So anyway, we're going to try this goat. This is probably the first my wife has heard about it, if she's watching today. But anyway, I do intend to move forward with this goat process that Mr. Barrett has told me about.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You can eat it after.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, the member from Elgin says we can also eat the goat, but I won't go that far.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let's not go that far.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wouldn't go that far.

But anyway, I do have a property where I could keep this goat. If it would work, it might be something really worth—sometimes the simplest—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes—it might be the simplest process going forward. It's something that we could try. I think anything is worth trying. I also intend to try the painting with the roller brush that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about.

Anyway, with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton. I'm certainly glad that he wasn't "goated" into saying something that perhaps he shouldn't have.

Further questions and comments? The member from Welland.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Welland?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Niagara Falls. That was a pretty bad joke, too, Mr. Speaker. I just throw that out there.

In my riding of Niagara Falls we have the St. Lawrence Seaway, where the ships come down. The zebra mussels can hitch a ride on them. Billions and billions of dollars are going through that seaway every year. If you take a look at what's going on in Niagara, not only that, you have the tourists who go there to watch the ships go through the locks. So this is a very, very important issue for Niagara. It's certainly a very important issue—and then the jobs that go with it, because there are people who work at the seaway who are taking care of that.

But the one thing that I haven't heard anybody talk about is what's going on with the municipalities. It is costing municipalities, because of invasive species, \$75 million to \$90 million a year to manage this, and that's

something that I think we have to talk about. We have to say: How do we make sure that we're not downloading that onto municipalities?

I was a city councillor in Niagara Falls. How many here have been city councillors? I'm sure there are quite a few. We all know where we want to spend our money because you want to make sure you're getting your picture in the paper and all that kind of stuff, but the reality is, what we have to make sure gets taken care of, which isn't so sexy, is the pipes. What happens is, the zebra mussels, when they go through, they start multiplying. How many know that they multiply pretty quickly? They're just like rabbits; really. They just continue to multiply and multiply—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Absolutely. What happens is, they end up clogging up the pipes—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This is a family show.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is a family show.

But the reality is, that's what is happening. So when you take a look at this bill, we have to make sure that you're going to put the resources in place to make sure the municipality isn't the one—and the taxpayers of the province of Ontario—that is going to have to pay for it, because the municipalities don't have the resources to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his final comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. Very good input from the elected members in the House, and quite valuable input from the scientific personnel that work for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. I understand that was much of the basis for this legislation. There's a wealth of knowledge within anglers, hunters, people who are out in the outdoors—

Interjection: Trappers.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —farmers, naturalists, trappers, commercial fishermen and the associations that represent them. We have to encourage these people to come out to committee. It's so important that we come up with an approach that's not merely reactive—that deals with the species after the damage has been done. We have that with the sea lamprey. We continue to deal with the sea lamprey, and that's an expensive approach. With Asian carp, there's an opportunity, in Ontario and Canada, to take a preventive approach. It's easier and it's a lot less costly to deal with some of these problems before they happen.

The legislation—and I'm not sure that a scientific approach is necessarily evident in this bill with respect to any decision-making or risk assessment. I'm concerned about the red tape that will inevitably come along with this legislation, and that would hamper prevention. I'm concerned about the downloading of responsibility for implementation onto landowners themselves. There goes the incentive for landowners to act. This could end up being quite unfair and punitive for people who own land and end up with some of these plants or animals.

I reiterate my opposition to warrantless entry.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good afternoon. It's always a joy being in here, whatever the debate is. We always find a way to make light out of some of the serious debate. We always find an opportunity to smile. When I look to my friends across the way and to my neighbours here to the right, we always seem to smile about issues.

But today I'm very pleased to once again stand up on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and speak to Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. The act itself will cover identification of invasive species and carriers, prohibited activities, and authorizations and agreements, along with special preventive measures, inspections, inspection orders, actions by the minister, enforcements, offences and penalties, and other miscellaneous items that are going to be discussed.

I'm looking forward this Friday to meeting up with a group out of my riding along the north shore, which is the North Channel Marine Tourism Council. We're going to be talking about challenges within their industry. I'm sure invasive species are going to come up, so I'm really enjoying the debate that we're having here this afternoon. I can bring some of those views and those points at that meeting while we're sitting down.

I remember last year one of the biggest issues that they raised was the Eurasian water-milfoil. Basically it's a very long weed, sometimes as long as 20 to 30 feet long, and what it does is it provides a large canopy. It takes away the oxygen levels within the waters, and you find it very much populated along the shorelines, so when the boats come in, it chokes up their propellers, it ties into their trailers and just creates a very difficult environment, particularly in the marinas. They've been looking for years in regard to how they can remove those. There was a kind of water lawn mower that was used.

I'm actually looking to meet up with the group on Friday, because there was a test piece of machinery that was used in the agricultural sector. What people were doing is they were just mulching and rolling over the bottom in the low waters, just eating it up. As you're pulling it out, you can dry it, and they've actually used it in other circumstances in the agricultural sector, which benefits their area. I'm looking forward to actually sitting down and meeting up with them, because I think it was actually used in—I'm looking at my friend across the way in London? Essex?

Interjections: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I think it was a gentleman from your area who actually brought the idea to the meeting last year. I'm looking forward to getting an update on how they're utilizing it.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin borders the Great Lakes. As well, it hosts a large number of provincial parks, protected conservancy lands and forestry areas. Those who live in these rural areas can tell you how many of these invasive species are having disastrous impacts on our region, across the province and beyond.

As the first stand-alone act to deal with invasive species in Canada, we are encouraged to see these issues dealt with first here in this Legislature. Currently, as we know, invasive species are dealt with in sometimes disjointed groups of 20 different federal and provincial acts, which I can imagine would be difficult to navigate through. This bill now consolidates the provincial side into one act under one ministry.

This sounds reasonable to me. It's something that a lot of individuals have been asking for, particularly within the marinas and particularly with other groups, because I've found in the past when dealing with MNR that you discuss a particular challenge—I'll use one that's quite familiar to me, which is the walleye fish habitat rehabilitation program that is going on on Manitoulin Island, which I dealt with a couple of years ago with a group who were looking at establishing this program in Kagawong.

The problem we were having was trying to move the project forward. We were dealing particularly with MNR on one particular issue. However, MNR being the left hand and MOE being the right hand, we found that they weren't talking to each other. Whereas MNR can sometimes make certain decisions, they always like the comfort and agreement of MOE to back up that decision. However, it doesn't prevent the project from going forward or the MNR to make that decision. With this particular walleye project, we were challenged and found it difficult to move the project forward because the left hand wasn't talking to the right hand.

The best way to deal with this, in my experience, is to bring both hands together to find out what they're saying. It was very nice to see that, when you sit them down both together, you find out where the confusion lies. Once you got both hands joined together, the project was successful. We got it moving forward. The walleye project has been a success for the last two years, from what I understand.

It just goes to show you that all these different ministries need a collaborative way to talk to each other so that we always know what one hand is doing as well as the other, so that we can benefit the organizations and the communities and the municipalities so they can move their projects forward.

We can go on and on to talk about dredging programs or the shoreline programs as well. It doesn't have to stop just with this piece of legislation—where we can consolidate certain issues so that we can deal with one particular act to move issues forward.

This bill will now consolidate the provincial side into one act under the ministry. The bill will allow the government to ban the possession, sale, transportation etc. of invasive species designated as a significant threat. It would allow the government to respond quickly when invasive species are spotted, and it would give the government inspection and enforcement powers when something is prescribed as a likely host and facilitator of an invasive species.

That has to be backed up with resources as well. It is so easy. I have talked with my friends across the way in

regard to the difficulties that certain ministries are having because now they are facing cuts. If we're not going to put the resources out there and target the funding that is going to be required, we're going to be challenged in order to meet whatever proposal or whatever legislation or whatever course of action is going to come out of this bill. This needs to be backed up by a concrete plan and resources and individuals, not the firing and laying off of individuals. We're actually going to have to hire individuals to go in and do the surveys, go out and do the testing, go out and make sure that we monitor and apply and charge individuals that are actually found to contravene this act.

I think we can all agree that this bill is needed. However, we need to know what the actual regulations will look like. We need to make sure the act has real teeth.

I had some great discussions last night with the group who had the wild game and fish reception and met with many friends from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunition Association and the Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association. Again, great organizations who have these particular issues at heart because a lot of them rely on these resources for their members, to make sure that the businesses and the boating institutions, the boating associations—the channels are open so that we can attract those very-much-needed dollars to our economies through tourism in northern Ontario and across this province.

Really, it's through lobby days like this that provide many of us with a face-to-face opportunity to hear from them about these and other issues. We share many of the same concerns. While everyone is in general support of this bill, we want to make sure that we get it right.

This is a bill to start towards a solution and a strategy to deal with invasive species. I am fortunate enough to have the largest freshwater island in the world in my backyard, which is Manitoulin Island. I don't know if many of you knew that. It is. It is a gem. It is a diamond, and some of these invasive species are putting a little tarnish on that gem. So we need to take the right course of action right away so that we can deal with it.

Manitoulin Island hosts one of the most biodiverse areas in the Great Lakes. Manitoulin Island is unique in many ways. As I said, it is the world's largest freshwater island. It has more than 100 inland lakes between its shores, and many of those lakes have islands on them as well.

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There are more than two dozen small settlements, First Nations and towns spread across more than 160 kilometres of boreal forest, lakes, rivers, shorelines, escarpments, meadows and alvars. Many people here and at home watching have travelled to Manitoulin Island and know what I'm talking about. The island is a beacon for hikers, cyclists, anglers and hunters, and everyone in between.

This gives me a great opportunity to talk about our wonderful Owen Sound transportation system, the Chi-

Cheemaun, which will be welcoming a lot of individuals to the island. I see my friend across the way, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I take my hat off to him for having worked with me and my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on the delivery and the issues that we were challenged with with the Chi-Cheemaun last year. Having that operate brings \$40 million to the island. That's the impact that it means. The prompt action that we took in order to get the repairs done so that the boat can safely dock on the island—again, I've always been one to give flowers where flowers are deserved, and you certainly deserve a flower there, my friend.

It seems as though invasive species have also come to the island over the years and are unfortunately causing grave concerns for people and organizations there. There are several groups on the island that are doing a lot of great work. Last night, I met with OFAH, which is one of the groups that have done really great work, making invasive species a priority in some of the work they do. Over the past several years, they have been funding an invasive species awareness liaison for Manitoulin Island to work in partnership with the Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council.

Last summer—this is key—Eric Labelle was hired through the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters as an invasive species awareness liaison for Manitoulin Island. Mr. Labelle was a Fleming College graduate who had taken both the outdoor adventure skills and earth resources technician programs, and was returning to achieve his environmental technician diploma.

Born and raised on Manitoulin Island, he was one of the lucky residents who could take advantage of the many outdoor activities the island offers. In enjoying these outdoor activities, Eric understood the importance of preserving our natural environment from invasive species for those of us enjoying the outdoors and wildlife now and for our future generations.

As part of OFAH's Invading Species Hit Squad on Manitoulin, it was Eric's main goal to facilitate the awareness of invading species across Manitoulin Island, as well as inform the public on steps to take in order to mitigate the further reproduction and spread of these species.

As Eric is the expert here, I am not even going to try to take some of his quotes. What I would like to do is read from his very excellent and detailed document that he produced, which is called Summary of Invasive Species Outreach and Monitoring Activities Conducted on Manitoulin Island, by Eric Labelle, under the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, from June 16 to August 29, 2014, in co-operation with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and the Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's a heck of a title.

Mr. Michael Mantha: He's done his work. Like I said, there's no point in me trying to take some of it. I thought it was important enough—and I hope I have enough time to read it into the record.

He starts with his introduction. It says:

"Since 1992 the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, were able to establish an Invading Species Awareness Program ... to address the ever-increasing threat posed by the growing number of invading species in Ontario. I am fortunate to have been able to participate in this program for the summer of 2014 and to continue the efforts established by the Invading Species Awareness Program. It has been my pleasure to inform the public on invasive species and their effect on our natural environment here on Manitoulin Island as well as facilitating identification, mitigation, and proper reporting techniques.

"The population of Manitoulin Island is approximately 12,600 people. However, this number increases by more than a quarter during the summer months as we are hosts to many seasonal residences. Around 200,000 people visit this island during this time, providing an excellent opportunity to inform the public not only from Manitoulin Island but from many places around the world on the hot topic that is invasive species.

"There is a dire need to present a strong message to the public on the effects of these species and to put forth ways to stop or mitigate them in order to preserve the unique biodiversity of Manitoulin. Being bordered by Lake Huron, now host to over 185 invasive species, Manitoulin Island is facing serious environmental threat. Visitors to the island are still traversing to inland lakes without the knowledge of cleaning and draining their boats. Live bait is still being dumped in the water bodies, causing potential risk of introducing new and potentially harmful species. Firewood is still being brought to Manitoulin and subsequently off the island, even with the presence of the emerald ash borer," which we talked about earlier, my friend. "The time to spread this message is now, and through this Invading Species Awareness Program I aimed to do just that."

Then he talked about this training that he received. "To be successful in this position, it was imperative to attend a two-day training session offered by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. It was conducted in the fishing heritage centre on June 5 and 6, 2014. All of their presentations and workshops provided me with a much greater in-depth knowledge base on invasive species. This workshop covered such things as identification, monitoring, reporting, prevention and mitigation efforts. The use of the EDDMapS," the "Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System, program was well-presented as a useful tool for ourselves to use and to encourage the public to get involved in the reporting of invasive species. Useful training in workplace safety and workplace discrimination and harassment policies was also given. In completion of this training workshop, each of the students were given the tools needed to complete the work term, such as a wealth of species information material, samples and data containing all pertinent information to successfully complete all invasive species awareness initiatives."

Wow. There's a lot here to say but I just want to get to his conclusion. I wish I had more time, but it seems like my time is being eaten up quite quickly. So I'll go to his conclusion from the report that he had presented.

Again, I would encourage you to look up the name. His name is Eric Labelle. His report that he put out is quite impressive. He has got a very nice invasive-species layout of identifying what those actual species look like. Very well laid out, thought out; a great piece of literature, very worthwhile to read. He has been published in many of the island papers and along Georgian Bay as well—a young man who is going places and who is quite knowledgeable through being provided with the opportunity to learn.

His report conclusion is, "It was a tremendous opportunity to be part of this Invading Species Awareness Program this summer. All of the learning opportunities presented through this occupation will only aid in elaborating on many skills. Gaining experience in media exposure and public speaking, a particular weak point of mine, became a positive experience and it was a chance for me to work on this skills set.

"The knowledge gained on invasive species throughout has only enforced the need for the preservation of our natural environment and has brought forth a very important ecological concern. It is my hope that this program continues to raise awareness on invading species in Ontario and that awareness turns to actions from the public and it will stop the spread of these species.

"All of the outreach initiatives I have undertaken have all been met with positive, and eye-opening, feedback. Therefore, one can conclude that people are willing to take necessary action, such as boat cleaning and draining, not moving firewood, not dumping their bait buckets, and to look before they leave, to prevent the spread of invasive species.

"Future outreach activities could concentrate more around media exposure through print, social, radio and television outreach. It would increase the number of people that would be exposed to this information. Continuing to deliver information to resorts, tent and trailer parks, motels, parks ... are great for making the information accessible to the tourism public. All in all, the summer work term went very well."

He goes on to thank a couple of individuals from Manitoulin Island. Special thanks go "to Seija Deschenes, Manitoulin Streams, and the Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council for having me this summer. Thank you to Susanne Meert and Calvin Crispo for working with me and helping to make this a very successful experience. As well, thank you to Alison Kirkpatrick and Matt Smith for all their support."

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There is an opportunity to learn from this whole bill. We've already seen a young man who has learned from it. We need to challenge ourselves to learn from it. I'll be looking forward to seeing this bill into committee so that we can have further discussion on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: If Ontarians were watching this debate this afternoon, they would see this Legislature at its very best. There have been several thoughtful speeches delivered this afternoon, both from members of the opposition and the third party. The speech that was just delivered by the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was a very thoughtful, very well-constructed speech.

This is a very serious issue. My riding of Peterborough, the city of Peterborough, is right in the middle of the Trent Severn system. Over the years, we've had the milfoil weed, which was an invasive species that spread into the Kawartha Lakes and damaged the habitat of pickerel and large-mouth bass, and other recreational fishing opportunities within the Trent Severn system.

But it's interesting. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh talked about the emerald ash borer. It got into Canada because the emerald ash borer was embedded in pallets which came in through Michigan into Windsor and then cut a swath—Mr. Speaker, as you'd know, your predecessor, Pat Hoy, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, actually showed us pictures that were taken by MNR. You could see the track of the emerald ash borer from Detroit into Windsor through to Leamington and Chatham–Kent–Essex. From those aerial photos, it was like an army marching from west to east, with the destruction that it left in its wake.

I know that decades ago in Ontario, Dutch elm disease destroyed all of the stately elms in many big cities and smaller communities right across Ontario.

The other one, which is interesting enough when you talk about shrubs or bushes used for landscaping and ornamental purposes, is the purple loosestrife. That was really an interesting one, because it was an invasive species, but if you went to landscape supply businesses, they were recommending it. You know, you put a nice front on your house with the dimensional stone and the evergreen bushes and all the other plants. That was an invasive species that everybody was using.

So the member delivered a very eloquent address to the Legislature this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to follow and comment on the member from Algoma–Manitoulin—is that the right order: Algoma–Manitoulin?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A beautiful area up there. I have a constituent who does aquaculture up there and has his cages on Manitoulin Island. Every day, they ship fish to St. Thomas to be processed, where his home plant is. I find that's pretty neat, that you can travel that far daily, even throughout the winter. I've been invited to come visit up there, so I think I might be up there sometime in the next month or two to take a look and hopefully see the beautiful scenery that's up in Manitoulin Island and area. I look forward to seeing it.

However, I'll just go back to my main point. I have yet to hear the government speak about maybe changing this bill a bit to deal with prevention of invasive species

entering Ontario. They talked lots today about the cost of dealing with invasive species. This bill sets it up to still accept invasive species and deal with it, so all they are doing is identifying them quicker, but they are still going to be spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year to deal with invasive species. Why not take a step back and try to have a prevention program like New Zealand, which has an excellent program that prevents invasive species from entering the marketplace? I think, at the end of the day, that would save our environment, it would save a heck of a lot of money for this government in dealing with invasive species, and I think it would put a lot of people's minds at rest worrying about invasive species and how they get into our province.

Hopefully, the government will see fit to start listening to the opposition on a few ideas. We do have ideas that make sense. We're shut out quite a bit, because that's the nature of this business. The majority rules. However, I think the people of this province would like to actually see them work with us in making things better and looking at the ideas that we have going forward with the Invasive Species Act. It's a good time to start listening to the PC Party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I actually prepared a 20-minute speech.

I want to get on the record something that I think is important, because I think we all understand that we have to do something here. This bill enables you to appoint inspectors to make sure invasive species aren't entering the province of Ontario. Does that mean you'll be hiring new staff? Asking the Ministry of Natural Resources staff to take this on—what will happen with that? You say you're going to make these positions exist on one hand, but—here's the concern that I have, and I want my colleagues to listen to this—they want to cut the Ministry of Natural Resources budget by 6% on the other hand. Here's what happens when you do that. Will you be laying off employees and then asking those who are left to pick up the slack? We know what happens. We've seen that happen in other situations.

If you're asking for an answer to the questions that I'm raising right now, you won't find them in the bill, and that's a concern for me. You may find it around the Liberal cabinet table, and that's fair, or you may find it at the minister's headquarters, but you won't find it in the bill or at any committee around the bill, and that's a concern.

Debating what we have in front of us here: Do we support moving to ban invasive species from Ontario? The answer is easy. I think everybody here can say it: Absolutely. Do we support the stakeholders who are calling for this? Absolutely. Of course. Can we be sure how this will look when it's implemented? Absolutely the answer is no, and that's a big concern.

When I look back at what has been quoted before—"The minister may appoint or designate persons or classes of persons as enforcement officers for the

purposes of this act"—here's the problem: a 6% cut at the ministry that will be overseeing this. Somehow the minister is going to be able to create jobs for people to stop invasive species entering the province.

My time is up; I realize that. I've got a few more things to say, but I'll speak again. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I was glad that my colleague brought up the purple loosestrife plan. My family and I go to New Brunswick every year, and for the longest time I'd say, "What a beautiful-looking plant on the side of the road. It's great." And then my in-laws would say, "Tracy, it's invasive." It causes harm. It saps nutrients to birds and wildlife. It degrades the soil and just makes it very difficult for all living things. But it is, as the minister said, a very good-looking plant.

I was listening to the debate from the PC member and the NDP member. When I look at the legislation, I think it does speak to some of their concerns. It says that it will provide a strong legislative framework to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species, and provide help by giving provisions to intervene earlier so that some of the species we don't want to come to Ontario don't get here. It will give us tools to prohibit activities such as possessing and transporting certain species. It has some other elements, as well, that are quite strong.

I always go back to, why this legislation? As I think one of the other members opposite said, it really brings together a patchwork of different pieces of legislation federally and provincially. If passed, this would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada, which is fantastic. That's really something for us to be proud of. It would complement the work of the federal government in this arena as well and really promote our joint accountability to all levels of government to manage invasive species.

I'm on the learning curve; I get the purple loosestrife thing now.

I'm looking forward to seeing this legislation pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his final wrap-up.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always nice to come into the House when you prepare yourself to give what you think is a passionate speech, something that you firmly believe in and something that's important to you—and I noticed that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs paid very much attention to pretty much each and every word that I put out there, and it was reflective in your comments. I do thank you for listening to the words that I offered.

1710

To the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London: Bring your rod when you come to Manitoulin Island. There are a lot of good camping areas there and we will welcome every dollar that you bring to the area, so you come on up. Bring your family and friends.

To my friend from Niagara Falls: Enforcement and funding is going to be key in this particular bill; you're absolutely right. It's something that I raised in my comments.

And to the Minister for Children and Youth Services and women's issues: You mentioned the word "will"; "will implement." My reflection on the bill and what I've read is, I've seen the word "may" a lot more than the word "will." In order to do things, I need to see a little bit more directive in this bill, which is why I'm looking forward to having it go to committee and to having those discussions.

The one thing I do want to put out is in regards to the EDDMapS that are out there: Go look them up. It's a tool that we could all use to detect and prevent the distribution of invasive species. It's available to you. Again, look up the name Eric Labelle, Invasive Species. It's a report that he provided under the Invasive Species Awareness Program, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and Manitoulin Area Stewardship.

The last thing I want to stop on is to actually mention what stop is. To stop invasive species: inspect your boat; drain your motor and your water; empty your bait bucket; wash and dry your boat and equipment; rinse your boat; spray your boat and dry your boat. Doing those steps will help to maintain a lot of our lakes and our shores that we have here.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for providing me the extra time. I'm just testing your patience to see how long you're going to let me you go on for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —but now I'm going to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: When this bill was first introduced, I had the honour and pleasure to speak at Queen's University in associate professor Shelley Arnott's class on aquatic invertebrates and ecosystems. Shelley's area of specialty is the invasive species spiny water flea, which reduces crustacean diversity, which impacts fish growth.

I have to say that I agree with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs 100% when he speaks of this being the time when the House is at its best, when we can all agree on the legislation we have before us.

Invasive species typically adapt and easily reproduce. This is the nature of the problem that we're dealing with. They tend to compete with native species of animals and plants for food and/or habitat and, in doing so, interrupt the ecological balance. They can cause physical damage to property and they can affect local economies.

I have to backtrack here a minute and say that I'm sharing my time with the member—sorry—from Barrie, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, and the member from Brampton–Springdale. My apologies.

To get back to the matter at hand: Invasive species can be introduced accidentally, as has already been mentioned, or on occasion purposely introduced for pest control. One example is escaped pets, such as Burmese pythons in the Florida Everglades, which now threaten local bird species.

Closer to home, the Asian carp is an imminent threat to the Great Lakes. Introduced as a food species in the southern US, they now have infested the entire Mississippi basin. Being voracious eaters of plankton, the basis of the aquatic food chain, they pose a considerable threat to our fisheries, which is a \$2.2-billion industry in Ontario. Asian carp eat 120% of their body weight each day. It has been estimated that just 10 males and 10 females would be enough to gain a foothold.

Invasive species already cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year, putting resource-based jobs in fisheries, forestry and agriculture, and in tourism, at risk. The total cost to Ontario for invasive species prevention, management, mitigation and associated research is unknown. There are several figures, however, that are available that illustrate the considerable economic impacts.

Zebra mussels, as has already been stated, cost Ontario up to \$91 million a year. The city of Toronto estimates that it has spent at least \$37 million over the last five years to replace city-owned trees killed by the emerald ash borer. The mountain pine beetle in western Canada has cost billions in lost revenue.

In the Kingston area, there have been growing reports that zebra mussels, round goby and garlic mustard are a growing problem. Round goby is an aggressive predator of fish eggs, contributing to the decline of many valuable sport fish populations. Garlic mustard, an aggressive invader of wooded areas, has become very prominent in Kingston, shading out native flora and inhibiting seed germination of other species.

The serious threat of invasive species must be addressed. The preceding legislation is a patchwork of more than 20 federal and provincial acts, none of which are designed to deal with invasive species specifically.

On November 5, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry reintroduced the Invasive Species Act to help address these legislative gaps. If passed, the legislation would provide a strong legislative framework to better prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species. The act would give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species. It would allow the government to intervene earlier and enable rapid response actions to address urgent threats, including working with partners to stop an invasive species from spreading—for example, by preventing the movement of contaminated firewood. It would also help promote compliance through inspection and enforcement measures.

Managing invasive species has always been a collaborative effort with all levels of government, industry, environmental groups and the public. If passed, the act would also work to expand on the use of strategic

partnerships to tackle this issue collectively. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I recognize the member from Barrie in continuation of the debate.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: With the reintroduction of our proposed legislation, Ontario is taking strong action to address the ecological and economic threats that invasive species pose to our natural environment.

The proposed Invasive Species Act was originally introduced in the Legislature in February of this year. The reintroduced bill remains the same except for one update to reflect the ministry's recent change to the name Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. Invasive species such as zebra mussels and emerald ash borer cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year. Others, such as Asian carp, have the potential to do long-lasting damage to our economic and environmental systems, such as significantly impacting our \$2.2-billion recreational fishing industry here in Ontario.

I know my colleague from Trinity–Spadina would be very upset by that. He comes to my riding to fish in Little Lake. I think it's quite hilarious that he comes to Little Lake because most of the people who live in my riding don't even know we have Little Lake. They only know about Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Han Dong: A beautiful lake.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's a beautiful lake. That's right.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established in Ontario is critical to our fight against this growing threat. The goal of our proposed invasive species legislation is to support the prevention, the early detection, the rapid response to and the eradication of invasive species in this province. With the reintroduction of our proposed legislation, we're taking strong action to address the ecological and economic threats that invasive species pose to our natural environment.

I'm going to quote an article here. My colleague from Kingston and the Islands did touch upon it, but I'm just going to read a little bit from an article in a Florida newspaper:

"The exotic pet trade has a way of introducing destructive and potentially dangerous creatures to places in which they don't belong, and Florida's sunny, warm climate makes for a perfect home for many of these invasive species." Unfortunately, Ontario can be home to many invasive species as well.

1720

"People buy a small snake, lizard, or colorful fish, and when it gets too big to handle, they dump it in an area in which they figure it will fit in. But if these unleashed creatures fit in too well, they not only thrive in their new homes—but without natural predators they can wreak havoc on the surrounding ecosystem, unbalancing it and potentially wiping out the native animals.

"Lately we've heard a lot about the Burmese pythons and the more aggressive African rock pythons that wild-life officials fear will wipe out the foxes, rabbits, deer, raccoons, opossums, and bobcats of the Everglades."

Who thought we'd ever have opossums? I have one in my backyard. Who ever thought that they would come that far north? It has lived through three winters already.

"Thousands are thought to be loose in parts of the state, but they have recently begun to appear" in other areas, too.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Ann, you can't read from your BlackBerry.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Oh, sorry.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes, I recognize the member.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I understand the rules of the chamber say that we are not allowed to read from our electronic devices, and I believe that is what the member from Barrie has been doing during her debate time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. You're absolutely correct; that is a point of order. Yes, I would remind the member from Barrie that you're not to refer to handheld devices.

Mr. Han Dong: She wasn't reading. You're playing with a tablet there.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Yes, exactly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continue on, please. Thank you.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: If the proposed legislation is passed, and I urge members to support this bill, we will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation. I think this is very important for the future of our recreational economy and for our agricultural economy as well. I urge you to support this bill. We do not want a mess such as in southern Florida, where pythons are breeding so quickly that there's no way, even with bounties on them, to keep control of them, and giant lizards are eating all of the natural wildlife. I urge you to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Brampton–Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

In this proposed legislation, the government is taking action to address the serious threat of invasive species to Ontario's economy and to our natural environment. In February, our government first introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act and reintroduced this proposed legislation on November 5, 2014. If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation.

Invasive species impact the lives of every Ontarian and cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year. They put resource-based jobs at risk; for example, the forest industry, the commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism and agriculture.

Impacts that are already existing in Ontario from these species include the zebra mussels that clog the intake

pipes of municipal water pipes and hydroelectric companies. They also interfere with the enjoyment of our lakes and our rivers. This can cost us anywhere from \$75 million to \$91 million every year to manage.

Another is ruffe. They can seriously damage native sport fish populations such as yellow perch by directly competing for food or habitat or through heavy predation of native sport fish eggs. Ruffe can very quickly become the most dominant fish in local areas because of their rapid reproductive and growth rates. This puts pressure on the native species and contributes to their decline. Given time, they have the potential to spread to all of the Great Lakes and many inland waters as well.

The emerald ash borer: The emerald ash borer was first found in Canada in Windsor, Ontario, in 2002. Since then, the beetle has spread across much of southwestern Ontario, including Sault Ste. Marie and the Ottawa area. Once infested, the mortality of ash trees is nearly 100%. Ontario municipalities have spent over \$71 million on managing the beetle and plan to spend an additional \$284 million over the next 10 years. The beetle is a significant threat to our forestry industry.

Another one is the Asian long-horned beetle, an invasive forest pest with no natural enemies in North America that attacks nearly all broadleaf trees, with native maples being the preferred host. A potential decline in hardwood broadleaf trees could have major consequences for Ontario's wildlife and biodiversity, negatively affecting future generations.

Impacts from species that are not yet in Ontario are also a possibility. The mountain pine beetle, which is in western Canada, is an insect responsible for destroying millions of hectares of pine trees in British Columbia. There's an increased risk of large fires with dead and dying trees creating a landscape of highly flammable stems. There's also a loss of wildlife habitat, and it degrades the overall visual quality of our forests.

The Asian carp, which is in the United States, has migrated through US waterways towards the Great Lakes. Asian carp prefer cool to moderate water temperatures like those found near the shores of the Great Lakes. If Asian carp become established in Ontario waters, they could potentially eat the food supply that our native fish depend on and crowd them out of their habitat. The decline of native fish species could damage sport and commercial fishing in Ontario, which brings millions of dollars a year into the province's economy.

We need this legislation, and our government encourages everyone to support this legislation. Currently, there's a patchwork of more than 20 federal and provincial acts, none designed specifically to deal with invasive species. For example, the Canada Shipping Act, which is a federal act, manages the discharge of ballast waters; the Plant Diseases Act, which is provincial, bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which would include an invasive insect or pathogen; and then there's the Public Lands Act, which is provincial and allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines.

The proposed legislation would help address legislative gaps, as none of these laws was designed specifically

to address invasive species. If passed, the Invasive Species Act would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing the debate, I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

Anyone who travels into Canada knows that when they arrive at the airport or at a port of entry, they are asked a series of questions: "Were you on a farm when you were abroad? Are you bringing any plant materials, any meat or any other agricultural products in?" So we're all used to the concept that we have strong laws, that when people try to import organic products into this country, they have controls over that, because the impacts of that could be severe: on agriculture, on our economy and on our ecology. But yet we don't have a sufficient framework right now to deal with some of the other invaders that might be brought in, not necessarily even by individuals coming into the country, but that will latch onto ships or onto containers or into products that are imported commercially into this country.

As a number of my colleagues have mentioned, we have species like zebra mussels that come to this country on the sides of ships. We have the Asian long-horned beetle that came in on wooden pallets of industrial products being imported into this country. When these and other species arrive here, the impacts that they can have on Ontario—on our ecology, on our economy, on our agriculture and on our forestry—are severe. As has been recounted, a number of these species—zebra mussels can have a huge impact on the intakes for municipal water systems, or on the cooling for nuclear power plants, if the intakes for the cooling water for those are impacted by zebra mussels. The Asian carp hasn't arrived yet in Ontario, but we know that it's in the United States. If it ever arrives into the Great Lakes or into any of our other water bodies—

Mr. Mike Colle: Mimico Creek.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mimico Creek, Etobicoke Creek, the Rouge, the Don, the Humber—the impacts would be severe.

1730

Mr. Speaker, what this bill proposes to do is that, for the first time, Ontario would have a regime, a framework, that would allow us to address these invasive species when they attack our ecology in this province. It would be the first jurisdiction that has a stand-alone regime that allows us to bring in place measures to control and eradicate these species when they present themselves in Ontario. That's why this is a very important piece of legislation.

The impacts that we've already seen in Ontario from some of these things—I know, here in my community, the emerald ash borer. Parts of the city of Toronto and neighbouring municipalities have literally been clear-cut of all trees. Thousands upon thousands of trees had to be

removed. The tree canopy in our municipality was destroyed. The urban heat island effect that that creates, the economic impact on municipalities and just the pleasure of enjoying our natural environment are greatly affected.

With other species, if they were to attack our forests or forestry industry, it could be decimated. The impacts on our economy, on Ontario's ability to continue to create products, export products, have good-quality jobs, would be severely impacted.

The impact on our agricultural sector could be severe with some of these species. Purple loosestrife is an example which chokes off a lot of the waterways wherever it takes root and prevents the flow of water to get into the land and pushes out other natural species. That has an impact.

I'm certainly not an expert in these areas, but I do know that some of these species have already impacted this province. We need a strategy, a framework, legislation, that will give us the tools to combat these problems when they arrive in Ontario and give us the ability to protect Ontario's natural environment and habitats. I urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Great. Thank you, Speaker. I was hoping you would remember my riding, as we are neighbours. I know sometimes it's hard to roll off the tongue, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin found out a couple of minutes ago.

It's an honour to rise to add some comments about Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I'd like to congratulate the members from Haldimand-Norfolk, Elgin-Middlesex-London and Sarnia-Lambton.

I know that a number of us on this side of the House have been talking in particular for the last couple of years about phragmites. I would like to take a few seconds just to thank a group in my riding, the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, who brought the awareness of the damage that phragmites cause to me a couple of years ago. They took me on a tour along Lake Huron in Lambton Shores. Actually, it was in the former municipality of Port Franks where I saw hectares and hectares of damage caused by phragmites. So it's important that this invasive species is brought front and centre in this debate.

I'd like to recognize, actually, Nancy Vidler and others from the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, who have worked very, very hard to raise this issue province-wide.

Many members have spoken today about the damage that phragmites cause in their riding, and I think all of us, as MPPs, have really been educated on this issue for the last couple of years.

I know in my riding, all across Lake Huron—Ipperwash, Port Franks up to Grand Bend, I believe, in Sarnia-Lambton as well—phragmites are very damaging. In the riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I think in Blenheim and across Lake Erie as well, it has been very

damaging.

I'm glad that we've had the opportunity to talk about phragmites today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize, for further questions and comments, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to speak after all the Liberals have spoken over there. It started off with the member from Kingston and the Islands. I always think fondly of Kingston. I hitchhiked there from St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1967. I know that a lot of you weren't even born in 1967, but there you have it.

I have to say, a couple of minutes ago when the member from Algoma-Manitoulin—Manitoulin, Manthoulin—when he spoke about emptying bait buckets, it reminds me—I live in a beautiful part of Windsor called Blue Heron Pond. We have carp—they're goldfish, right? After they got too big for the bowl, somebody dumped them in the pond. We have blue herons. We have swans—and ducks and geese, of course. I have beautiful ring-necked pheasants in my backyard. I can show you the picture.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Any unicorns?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No, no unicorns. I think they're up around Elgin county somewhere.

But we keep dumping these things that we don't want anymore, or we flush them, and they end up in our lakes and rivers, because that's what happens with invasive species.

The member from Barrie was talking about opossums. I had opossums on my front porch in my other home. They come into Windsor on the lumber trucks. There's lumber coming in across the border all the time. The opossums are there. They don't have any hair on their ears. They're freezing in the wintertime. You look out my front window and there they are, paws up in their ears.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Give them a toque.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Give them a toque. I had to dip a little baby opossum out of my pool at my other home. I just threw him over the fence back to the neighbour, where his mother lived, but that's what you do with these invasive species, right?

The pythons in Florida? They have round-ups. They have bounties. They go out and collect them, and they give prizes to the one who gets the biggest one—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, we do—Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I do want to say it's very hard to follow the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, who's always very entertaining. We have no unicorns in our riding of Ottawa South, either.

I just wanted to say a couple of things about this bill. I think it's important as we'll be the first jurisdiction in Canada to have stand-alone legislation for invasive species. It does impact our economy, so if you look at something like zebra mussels, that's a serious cost to utility companies and our municipalities as well, which are affected by water intakes that are clogged by zebra mussels. We have phragmites.

To the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I just want to say that when we bring forward bills like this and a lot of pieces of legislation, we all have common experiences. We have a shared ideal, I believe, although we see different ways of doing things to try to correct those things or get in front of those things that are affecting our communities. That's on all sides of the House.

I'm glad we're talking about it today, because the emerald ash borer has affected my community of Ottawa. I think 40% of the tree cover in Ottawa is ash, and we've lost that. On my street alone, we lost 30 ash trees; I lost one. Pleasant Park Woods, which is an urban forest—not a big one—in Alta Vista has been there for years and years. My wife remembers driving to work last winter. Linda drove to work one day and the forest was there. When she came back, half of the forest was gone. That's about two or three acres.

These are the things that we have to get ahead of. I think this legislation will build on our ability to prevent these things from coming in and to deal with them when they're here. I support the bill fully.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'm proud to speak again on this bill. I'm glad we're finally debating it in the House. I would like to hear more of what the government has to say about this bill, other than four of them standing up over 20 minutes and each saying the same thing, basically. I brought forth ideas today with regard to this bill, and not one member has mentioned any response to anything I've brought forward. I'm hoping when we hit committee, we'll actually have a debate and a vote to support some of the ideas going forward.

I want to bring forth another issue. It goes along somewhat with invasive species, but really when we were talking about washing out your bait pails and making sure you're not transferring bait from island to island, I find it very interesting that the Ministry of Natural Resources here will use a bridge, an actual structure that people use to drive their cars over water, as the border between which side of the bridge you can take bait out and which side you can't—because they're saying that the bait have a disease in them—and rightly so: They should stop them from doing it. However, they're using a bridge as the barrier, as if the fish know that they shouldn't swim to the other side of the bridge because they're tainted with a virus.

1740

It's little things like this that you could probably fix. I don't know why you guys aren't fixing little things like this. Why would you use a bridge to tell a fish that it

can't swim across? You're still spreading the disease throughout the province, although it might look, on paper, like you've dealt with it—because I know that's what you're saying about this: You'll be the first jurisdiction to deal with invasive species. Why don't we be the first jurisdiction to do it right, to ensure that we have a proper debate, to ensure that our ideas are brought forward, instead of you guys saying, “We want to be number one. We want to be first”?

You're still going to be first at the end of the day, but let's sit down and have a good debate about this. Please, somebody on this side of this House, actually speak about the bill instead of those talking points sitting in front of you—I caught myself, Speaker.

Anyways, thank you. I'll talk again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the original member for—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Don't we get a chance?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I don't believe so.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, it started here. Nice try. That's the other part of your 20-minute speech you had.

I recognize the member from Barrie for her final two minutes.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Partnerships are involved in this bill. We have to have partners when we're managing invasive species. It's always been a collaborative effort, and will continue to be, with all levels of government, industry and environmental groups. For instance, there is an Invading Species Awareness Program with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, which Ontario helped to create and continues to support.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is supportive of this, and their executive director says about the proposed legislation, “I am pleased that the Ontario government will reintroduce the Invasive Species Act, a positive step in the fight against invasive species. The sale, movement and importation of invasive species in Ontario are of a serious concern.”

The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London made reference to prevention earlier. I want to point out to this member that this act would include a range of prohibitions such as importing, depositing, releasing, transporting or possessing invasive species. These prohibitions will help with prevention.

The Invasive Species Centre: Their executive director says of this bill, “The proposed legislation is welcome and timely, and would help to set clear priorities and identify those invasive species that are posing the highest risk to Ontario's environment, economy and social values. This initiative would also reinforce the importance of all stakeholders working together toward common objectives that would see invasive species being addressed in classrooms, boardrooms and at the community level.”

I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to take this opportunity today to address Bill 37, introduced by the Minister of Natural Resources. I recently brought hundreds of letters from my riding addressed to the Minister of Natural Resources, asking for his assistance in protecting natural resources and species that could be put at risk by a proposed landfill site in my riding. I hope that the minister will read them and do what he can to ensure that those species and our drinking water are not put at risk.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. As our critic for natural resources, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, said in his leadoff speech, we will be supporting this legislation, but we will be putting forward amendments that we think will make it work better. As he referred to just a few minutes ago, we don't hear much from the government, but there are things that could improve this bill. Protecting Ontario's environment and natural resources is important, so I hope that the government side will listen to our comments and consider the amendments, rather than playing politics with this issue.

According to Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program, "Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to Ontario's biodiversity and the health of our lakes, forests, and wetlands."

We've all heard the stories of Asian carp. When startled by noise such as a boat motor, these large fish can jump up to 10 feet in the air, sometimes landing in the boats, which could put boaters at risk. But an even bigger worry is the impact to the environment. Asian carp can eat up to 20% of their body weight each day, leaving little food for the native fish, and the grown carp have no natural predators.

We've heard of zebra mussels, which are impacting our lakes and reducing food supply for our fish.

We've heard of the emerald ash borer, which is already attacking our ash trees, as we heard about in the city of Ottawa, and the concerns about the Asian longhorn beetle.

There is purple loosestrife, which degrades wetlands. It can decimate and choke out native plants that make up the habitats where fish, birds and animals feed and seek shelter. A single plant can produce over 300,000 seeds—and the gypsy moth that has caused so much damage in Niagara.

The impact of these invasive species on our environment, our natural resources and our economy can be significant, so it is important that we get this legislation right.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this issue is too important to let politics play into it, and I have concerns that with the way this bill is currently written, there's an opportunity for that to happen.

For this legislation to be effective, it should be scientific, it should be proactive and it should be fair.

In his leadoff speech, the minister mentioned that dealing with invasive species is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. I know that municipalities have contacted previous ministers to express concerns about invasive species and ask for greater assistance. However, addressing this problem doesn't just require all levels of government; it requires environmental organizations, farmers, conservation groups, people who are transporting goods and many others to work together. You simply cannot get that level of co-operation and agreement unless you can demonstrate that the invasive species list is based on scientific data.

Currently, the legislation doesn't include a scientific process for determining which species are being added to the invasive species list.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government's non-scientific approach right now on the threat to our pollinators, and it could be putting our bee population at risk. The government is blaming all the bee deaths on neonicotinoids, without having the scientific data to really show all the causes. What if the neonicotinoids are only a small part of the problem? What if, as some people and studies have suggested, the larger threat to our bees is the mites or the chemicals that beekeepers have been using to treat the mites? What if the cause is the extreme cold winters we've been experiencing, and we need to look at better ways to protect our bees? The government's knee-jerk political reaction may be causing hardship for our farmers without actually addressing the major cause of bee deaths. That's why we need a scientific approach, both for our pollinators' health and the invasive species.

The Ministry of Natural Resources' Ontario invasive species plan, released in 2012, mentions science 24 times. It talks about the importance of developing science-based standard monitoring protocols for priority invasive species, pathways and habitat types. It talks about Ontario ministries, including MNR and OMAFRA, participating in a variety of conferences designed to ensure ongoing science transfer. But that science-based approach doesn't seem to have made it into this legislation. I hope that this is one of the things that can be corrected at committee.

Mr. Speaker, one of our other concerns in this act is that it is reactive. It will add invasive species to the list when there is evidence that they have already caused harm. Our critic for natural resources, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, has proposed that we look at a pathway approach instead. This approach is proactive and would study potential invasive species, the harm that they could cause and the pathways that they could use to enter the province. This would allow resources to be focused where there is a potential problem and, importantly, where we can try to stop the invasive species before they enter the province.

This approach was the focus of the Ministry of Natural Resources' Ontario invasive species plan, released in 2012. In fact, that report said, "Preventing harmful introductions before they occur is the most effective

means to avoid the risk of invasive species arriving in Ontario. Investments in prevention are cost-effective as they avoid the economic, environmental and social costs of invaders.”

1750

As I said earlier, for this legislation to be effective, it should be scientific, it should be proactive and, again, it should be fair. Part of that is ensuring that we are working with impacted property owners, not making them the enemy. I'm pleased that this bill requires a warrant for many searches, but I'm concerned that there is still an exception which allows enforcement officers access without a warrant or permission of the owner.

While we support this bill, I think we need to be careful with any legislation that provides access to private property without a warrant, unless there is an immediate danger. I'm especially concerned when that authority is given to someone other than a police officer.

Coming from an agriculture community, biosecurity is always a huge concern. Anytime we're expanding the number of people who have a right to enter the property without the owner's permission, I have a concern.

I know that there are many people in this Legislature who haven't been involved in agriculture, so I want to explain a little bit more. Unfortunately, in my riding of Oxford we're dealing with an outbreak of H5N2 avian flu which was found on a turkey farm. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency took swift action to quarantine the farm and culled 45,000 turkeys to ensure that the rest of our poultry is safe. The farms are being disinfected, and other farmers are stepping up their biosecurity measures. One of the biosecurity measures they are taking is disinfecting the tires on feed delivery trucks to ensure that it isn't being spread from farm to farm.

On hog farms, we have biosecurity measures to stop the spread of PED. If the enforcement officer has to get permission from the farmer before entering the property, that gives the farmer the ability to put conditions such as disinfecting tires in place before the enforcement officer is allowed to enter the property. It gives the farmer the opportunity to ask questions such as which farms the enforcement officer has visited and to say no if the visit at the time would put animals at risk.

Mr. Speaker, no one wants the spread of invasive species, but we need to ensure that we are setting up systems where people are working together and where knowledge and rights of the property owner are respected.

I want to commend the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for their work to raise awareness of invasive species. In 1992, they created a partnership with MNR called Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program, which has been working hard to inform people about the invasive species and actions they can take. In fact, one of their recent publications was *Landowner's Guide to Managing and Controlling Invasive Plants*. I think we need to ensure that we continue the approach of education and working with landowners.

The minister talked about enforcement, but we need to ensure that the people being punished are the people

breaking the law, such as those trying to import invasive species, not the property owners who happen to have an invasive species on their property and are trying to do the right thing.

By definition, it's difficult to stop the spread of these species. They don't recognize property boundaries any more than they stop at provincial boundaries. The legislation should help property owners deal with them, not penalize them.

Section 29 of this bill says the minister “may”—and it was mentioned earlier in the other speech. “The minister may authorize compensation” for a number of things, including the “loss of any building, structure, conveyance or property owned....” That concerns us when the word is “may.” That also implies that the answer could be “may not,” and I think that would be unfair. This section needs to be strengthened.

We all understand that sometimes actions need to be taken for the greater good to stop the spread of disease or invasive species. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, we've seen that demonstrated in the last week in my riding when the H5N2 avian flu was found at the turkey farm. It's obviously not an invasive species like we're addressing here today, but the impact is similar to the type of situation that would be covered by this bill. As I said, the CFIA quarantined the farms and culled 45,000 turkeys to ensure that the rest of our poultry is safe.

We understand that sometimes steps need to be taken to protect the greater good, but there has to be a recognition of that impact. But this act gives the minister and the inspection officers significant powers over private property, and with that power there should be some responsibility. The property owner shouldn't be left to pay the price.

There are different threats from invasive species across Ontario. It's difficult to get this legislation right when we're talking about so many different species—from plants to fish to insects—all of which travel in different ways, enter the province from different areas and pose different threats to our environment and our natural resources.

One of the things that's great about this Legislature is that we have members with such varied backgrounds and representing all parts of Ontario, people who can look at whether this legislation will work in their riding: people like the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, whose riding is along Lake Erie and who knows how devastating the impact of the Asian carp would be; people like the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, who dealt with the gypsy moth in his riding; members from northern Ontario ridings who could talk about the dangers invasive species pose to the forestry industry; members who can talk about wetlands in their ridings that are being impacted; and people who work in industries that will be impacted.

There are some people in this Legislature who probably wouldn't have considered the biosecurity issues on farms created by this bill—and the people who have raised other concerns that we haven't considered yet. It

shows the value of debate that we have in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. Recently it seems there has been a trend towards cutting off debate or government members using some of their time to complain that there has actually been too much debate. We're seeing in the last few days a new tactic: We're splitting up the time and everybody speaks in a matter of 20 minutes and nobody gets to say anything—and to move this through.

I would hope that that won't be the case with this bill because we need to hear from members from all areas of Ontario. If this bill passes second reading, it goes to committee. We need to ensure that it travels through areas that are being impacted or threatened, as well as to hear from residents and experts from those areas.

I'd like to see us travel in southwestern Ontario to hear from farm organizations, to hear from other organizations like the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, which I know has been working on some of these same issues. They represent the area that the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London is from. I'd like to see the committee travel to northern Ontario to talk about the forestry industry and what they need to do to protect it.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill to put forward some concerns and suggestions. I hope that the government has been listening to the debate today because I think a number of members have put forward real concerns and suggestions on how this bill could be improved.

We agree with the need to identify invasive species, and not just those in Ontario. We live in a global society. Travel, trade and Ontario's central location mean that we cannot ignore the invasive species that are impacting our neighbours. We believe that our approach should be proactive, to try and stop these threats before they cross our borders. We believe that the approach should include education and should work with landowners to address invasive species. I hope that the government will agree with our approach and work with us to ensure that this bill meets those goals.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to put a few thoughts on the record on this bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Oxford has in fact given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given to him by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—or parliamentary assistant, in this case—may have up to five minutes to reply.

I'll turn it over to the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to speak about the problems of the Housing Services Corp. and the cost to Ontario's social housing.

Every dollar that the Housing Services Corp. spends is one that's supposed to build, repair or operate social housing. Earlier today I brought forward a number of examples of housing providers who are being overcharged for natural gas and insurance by the Housing Services Corp.

1800

In his response, the minister failed to address these examples or the families that are still waiting for affordable housing because this money has been diverted. I want to mention a number of them again.

In one year, CityHousing Hamilton reported spending \$1.1 million more for gas because they had to purchase it through the Housing Services Corp., enough to provide rent supplements for 140 families.

Peel region reported they paid an additional \$200,000 for gas in one year.

The Thunder Bay district social services board reported that they paid an additional \$750,000 for natural gas over four years due to the HSC.

This morning, I asked the minister how much buying through the Housing Services Corp. is costing Toronto Community Housing. We know the minister has met with them, but he didn't answer my question. We know that there are thousands of families in Toronto waiting for social housing. We know that there are units that have been boarded up because the TCHC can't afford to repair them. We know that Toronto Community Housing would save money and could help more people if the minister and his government would support my private member's bill.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't just large housing providers that are paying too much due to the Housing Services Corp. Oxford county says the Housing Services Corp. costs them about \$100,000 a year, enough to provide housing for 25 more families. As I mentioned in my question this morning, Bruce county, Hastings, Halton, Prince Edward, Lennox and Addington, if they weren't required to purchase services through the Housing Services Corp., could all help more people who need social housing.

Over the last two days alone, I have received support for my bill from the city of Owen Sound, the township of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands, the township of Alfred and Plantagenet, the township of Faraday, the township of Wainfleet, the township of Hudson, the town of Tillsonburg in my riding, and, incidentally, the city of Quinte West, which is of course in the parliamentary assistant's own riding.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 100 housing providers who are obtaining insurance from another company but are still being forced to pay the Housing Services Corp. for the privilege of doing so: 2.5% of their cost. That means their insurance volume isn't required to get discounted rates for other housing providers, as the government claims. It means those 100 housing providers

are paying a fee equal to 2.5% of the premium to the Housing Services Corp. simply because the HSC has a monopoly and can demand it. We have an opportunity to stop that from happening. Think of how much affordable housing could be provided with that money.

Where is that money going? Some of it is going to fund the more than \$82,000 the CEO has spent on travel, including \$53,000 on flights. Some of it was invested in a corporation whose address is a lawyer's office in Manchester, England. Mr. Speaker, we don't know why the money was put in that corporation that doesn't seem to have ever operated, but the money seems to be gone. The money also went into Innoserv Solar, a for-profit solar company that received over \$1 million in loans from the HSC, most of which was written off as uncollectable in the same year it was given. The government's review isn't looking at this money, where it went or whether there is any way to get it back. Every dollar was one that was supposed to go to social housing.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about political parties. This is about money being diverted away from vulnerable people who need affordable housing. That's why I was so disappointed that the minister ignored my question this morning. The government says more accountability was needed at the Housing Services Corp. Clearly, there is still a problem. In 2012, the Housing Services Corp. entered into a partnership with another British organization.

This Thursday, we have an opportunity to increase that accountability. We have an opportunity to stop public money from being wasted and ensure that it provides housing for our most vulnerable, as it's intended to do.

I hope that now that he has had a few more hours to reflect, the minister and the members of the government will support the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act and stop the waste and misuse of social housing dollars.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Oxford. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Housing Services Corp., HSC, is an independent non-profit corporation originally established under the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, SHRA, and continues under the Housing Services Act, 2011.

HSC is mandated to provide certain vital and valued services centrally with a goal to reduce costs and improve efficiencies to the housing providers assessing them.

Under the Housing Services Act, 2011, HSA, our government broadened the HSC mandate to improve the operation, efficiency and long-term sustainability of housing providers that provide housing for moderate and low-income households.

As a government that is committed to openness and transparency, we believe that accountable, fiscally responsible policies are critical. That is why in 2011,

under the HSA, our government reformed the legislation that governed HSC. As a result of our reforms, HSC is required to provide an annual report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with audited financial statements, within 180 days of the end of its fiscal year.

Mr. Hardeman's erroneous assertion that our government changed legislation to remove a requirement for HSC to report salaries on the sunshine list is simply not true. The changes to the HSA did not remove HSC from the disclosure requirements in the public sector disclosure act. In fact, the HSA included stronger accountability requirements by requiring HSC to include certain salaries in its public annual report.

The HSC is only required to report for the year that it's receiving funding from the government of Ontario of at least \$1 million or government funding that is at least 10% of its gross revenues, and then only if that 10% is \$120,000 or more. No funding has been provided to HSC by the ministry since 2011-12, and therefore it's not required to report salaries for 2014.

I'm increasingly puzzled by Mr. Hardeman's ongoing campaign of misinformation around the HSC. The HSC benefits every one of its clients in the long run by purchasing bulk services for them all, at once.

In his question this morning, my honourable colleague mentioned some municipalities he claims have expressed concerns over HSC and its operations. For example—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask the member to withdraw. You used a word that is unparliamentary, so I would ask that you would withdraw.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw, Speaker.

Let me read to you a quote from Peel Housing Corp.:

"I am writing to express my full endorsement for Housing Services Corp. HSC works for us housing providers by leveraging our combined buying power in the private market, making sure we get the best deals. HSC provides capacity and shared expertise in areas such as insurance and energy purchase, so that housing providers can focus on service delivery to our low-income and vulnerable tenant population. HSC ensures that both small and large affordable housing providers in Ontario continue to be viable.

"Since 2013, HSC has significantly improved its programs and operations and the value they deliver to the social housing sector in Ontario. They're helping us reduce energy consumption. They're sharing tools to help keep insurance costs low and improve the safety of our communities. HSC has also demonstrated their commitment to improving their programs on an ongoing basis."

Speaker, that was a quote.

As I said earlier, our government is committed to being accountable, open and transparent about how we spend taxpayers' hard-earned money. Back in the fall, when the minister became aware of some questionable reimbursement and compensation practices at HSC, he wrote to the board chair reaffirming the government's expectation that the corporation ensure that every dollar is spent wisely and efficiently.

In response to his letter, the HSC board approved revised remuneration and expense policies that are more in line with the Management Board of Cabinet's directives. As part of HSC's commitment to be more open, transparent and accountable, the corporation asked the ministry to help facilitate an independent third-party review of HSC and its subsidiaries. We will await the outcome of the review, due later this spring, and if further action is needed, our government is willing to take it.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude here. I have much more, but my time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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