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of Debates
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des débats
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Wednesday 13 April 2016

Mercredi 13 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS
ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN
AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 12, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, today. Before I start off, I want to say this: Never has there been so much controversy by so few people and never has so much misinformation been used with so few facts to create a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Actually, you're using unparliamentary language. I'd ask the member to withdraw and then make sure that he talks about the bill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw. I'm not quite sure what was unparliamentary, but I withdraw anyway.

It has created a mountain out of a molehill with Bill 100. I support Bill 100, but I do understand why people are suspicious, and they have cause and they are justified to be suspicious. For the last 13 years, rural Ontario has been hurt and injured with legislation that has steadily eroded property rights, steadily devalued our properties, diminished our prosperity, and it has all been done through legislation. Typically, the legislation sounds good, things like the provincial policy statement, the greenbelt, the Clean Water Act, a number of things. So I do understand why there is fear about Bill 100.

But after over a decade of intrusive legislation, the Liberal government has actually introduced a bill that is beneficial and helps rural Ontario. It promotes and improves property rights in Ontario. This is the first bill I have seen from this Liberal government that actually helps and promotes property rights. I'd like to take a few moments to tell people why. I do understand that it is as

if the world had been turned upside down by this Liberal government and Bill 100. People don't know what to make of it.

The facts for private property owners are simple. Presently, property owners are prevented in law from suing for more than \$1,000 if there are damages to their property caused by trespassers. Under Bill 100, that unfair limitation of \$1,000 is removed. If Bill 100 passes, there will be no arbitrary limit on how much people can seek for damages; definitely an improvement, and it adds to the protection of property rights. Presently, the fines for trespassers on private property are set at a maximum of \$2,000. Under Bill 100, that maximum is raised to \$10,000; certainly another benefit and another added protection for private property owners.

At the moment, when there are trail agreements, the covenants on those agreements are not legally enforceable. Bill 100 permits covenants, such as time of use, duration of the covenant, who can access the trails and what types of vehicles. A whole host of covenants can be placed, but they also now become legally enforceable by the property owner; another benefit and another protection for property rights.

One thing that many people have found to be the scariest of all with Bill 100 is voluntary easements. They can only be created by mutual consent of the property owner. There is no imposition, there is nothing arbitrary, there is no coercion and there is no liability with those easements. But it does allow choice; indeed, a very scary thing to allow choice with legislation in Ontario.

But I think something else has been missing in this discussion, and that is the benefits and the case for rural Ontario. Trail associations and businesses that benefit from trail use are extensive and expansive. Expanding the use of trails helps our rural and small-town restaurants, motor sport dealers, motels, bed and breakfasts, and stores. Every business in rural and small-town Ontario benefits from trails as people come to rural Ontario for recreation and tourism.

The corollary of that, of course, must also be true: Reducing access to trails reduces business opportunities, reduces revenues and reduces prosperity for rural Ontario.

Certainty and security of tenure and use for both the property owner and the trails association is needed to permit and encourage greater investment and expansion in trail infrastructure, such as highway overpasses, river and stream crossings, and bridges. Certainty and security of tenure and use must be there to encourage expansion.

Rural Ontario would largely be empty and unpopulated without transferable easements registered upon title, as we have throughout Ontario today. Deeded access, rights of way and utility easements: All are registered on title, and all are transferable—nothing scary. Indeed, without easements, we would all be living in the dark without electricity and without phones, and very few would have access to their cottages without transferable easements registered on title. I would suggest that there are very few people here today, very few people in Ontario and very few people watching this who don't already have some form of transferable easements registered on their properties.

0910

In closing, Speaker, it would really be a dystopian world where voluntary and mutually beneficial easements are viewed as dangerous, as suspicious, as harmful for property owners, and where improving rural business opportunities is seen as a negative.

I do hope the government has learned some powerful lessons with Bill 100—powerful lessons: that it is not bad—that it is indeed good—to protect property rights, to strengthen property rights. This is a good thing.

I have to commend the Minister of Tourism for being the first minister in my time who gets it, who understands that if we promote and protect property rights, we will all be better off.

But I will also say this: I hope the rest of the ministers in cabinet understand what this minister has done, and I hope the Liberal Party understands what has happened. This great outcry over Bill 100 is because of the lengthy assault on rural Ontario in the past, the continuous, never-ending and relentless erosion of property rights, and the suspicion and fear that this Liberal government has fostered and cultivated over the last 13 years. I hope this Liberal government is now on a new trail.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's quite an amazing thing to come in here in the morning and experience something that all of us will be telling our grandchildren about in the decades to come: that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington actually stood in this House and said that something in a government bill was worth supporting and was useful, contrary to rumour. For those of you who may not be familiar with this place, this is an extraordinary moment—an extraordinary moment.

I want to say that I had an opportunity to look over the comments from our critic the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who in fact said “Yes, this bill does some very useful things for trails, for people in Ontario who like to wander through the countryside and for property owners.”

The decisions about the trails are in the hands of the landowners. As far as I can tell, and I stand to be corrected, there's no expropriation here, there's no action to alienate people from their land. There's an opportunity for landowners to be protected in a way they may not have been protected in the past. There's an opportunity

for access to trails in a way that's more predictable than has been in the past.

Frankly, Speaker, for those of us who enjoy the extraordinary landscape that we have here in Ontario, to be able to go out and actually roam around that landscape, and for those who own the land that we happily tread upon to have protection as well—those are all good things. In an epoch-making way, that has been established by the comments of this member.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As usual, it's a pleasure to see you in the chair.

I would like today to introduce Patrick Connor from the Ontario Trails Council. Thank you very much for being here.

I would like to just quickly pick up on some of the comments that have already been said. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, thank you very much for your comments, and thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for acknowledging the extraordinary and perhaps, indeed, historic moment about something positive that we've done.

But I do also want to pick up on some of the other comments that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has come forward with. I'm getting a little bit of fearmongering in some of the statements that have been made. Despite the fact that he has said that everyone benefits from trails, he also mentions, on the other hand, that this legislation is going to turn the world upside down and that it's harmful for landowners.

This piece of legislation has been worked on by many organizations for many years, and I'm sure that the guest in the gallery would attest to that. We also have numerous other positive comments of support from organizations like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. They represent an enormous number of people across the province. They're very supportive of the trails act. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Niagara Escarpment Commission—all supportive of the act.

So I think we should stop the fearmongering and look at what's positive. They are willing landlords.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my property owners. I have to commend the member from Lanark, because he brings up a good point: We're already seeing trails in our area that have been lost this year. It's unfortunate, because I think the bill was there to add some clarity and to put some tools in place that should enhance this. But with the lack of consultation with the different people involved, it seems to have had the opposite effect. I think it's a lesson, and I think the government needs to get out there and do a little bit of healing of some of these groups and landowners that are going to take away a very important resource of ours.

I think it's important, especially in the wintertime, to get out and have something to do and be out in the out-

doors. We're seeing, in area after area—and unfortunately, with a trail that goes across multiple properties, if you lose one, you lose the trail. I know that it supposedly might have been a bill, hopefully, with a good goal in sight, but we see it's not there—and the unintended consequences.

We encourage the government to do a little more consultation and get out there. It's a little after the fact—we would have liked to have seen this done earlier—but the end result is what's important here. I don't think we want to lose these important trails. It's good for tourism, and it's good just for the community. As the mayor of South Glengarry—we purchased a railway track that could be used for trails.

But it really takes the multiple trails being put in place. The volunteers that work at getting these trails—it's a lot of work. They're seeing the loss now, so it's got to be hard on them. I think we have to go out and give them a little bit of moral support and help them out on this one. Hopefully, we can do something that gets back and actually enhances the trails, not takes away from them.

We're looking forward to seeing some of that consultation and some work with the government with these owners.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I enjoy how he looks at each section of the bill and analyzes them and gives, really, a wonderful explanation on the pros and the cons.

This time he was pro-bill, but the member from Kingston—I don't think she realized he was actually complimenting the government on a very unique circumstance. We don't often do that here. We are the critics; we're the opposition, and we're supposed to point out the problems with bills. That's our duty. We want to make sure that they get the bills right, because there have been a lot of bills that have come through this House that aren't quite right.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, exactly.

They sound good, and there are some pieces that are in there, but then there's always that hidden poison pill. It's hard to vote against, because it's doing some good over here, and then it isn't helping in other areas. So it's always a tough decision.

That's what our role is: to let them know about those poison pills and to try to make sure they acknowledge those. Hopefully, when the bill goes to committee, they listen to the people that this bill is affecting.

0920

She did talk about support for this bill. There have been several municipalities who have passed resolutions on this bill. But there is something that I think—I looked in the bill and maybe the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington can comment on it. The minister has authority to designate special designation to

trails. I've heard through some discussions that landowners who have these trails on their property are not sure what that means and what that's going to look like for them. If the minister has power of designation, how does that translate into seasonal use or promotion under tourism and things like that? So that's a question; if anyone has an answer, I'd love some clarity on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I don't know if I can answer all the questions from the member from London–Fanshawe in two minutes, as well as thank people—the members from Toronto–Danforth, SDG and London–Fanshawe—for coming to the House this morning and listening. I talked in my comments about this Liberal government learning some lessons from Bill 100. The member from Kingston and the Islands ought to have listened and heard about lessons, because she obviously didn't listen to my comments whatsoever and brought her talking points from the corner office instead of her listening hat this morning. Enough of that. I do hope the member from Kingston and the Islands may correct her record afterwards, after listening.

However, for the member from London–Fanshawe: The minister does have powers to create a special designation, but there are no underlying authorities to impinge or infringe on use or title or enjoyment of one's private property. The minister can make a pronouncement that this is a really, really special trail, and maybe put a plaque up. They would even have to ask the property owner to put a plaque up for a really special, special trail. But there are no underlying authorities in the bill for the minister to, like I say, infringe or impinge on private property.

I do hope the Liberal government is listening and that they stay on this new path, this new trail of bringing legislation that benefits rural Ontario, and that they bring their listening cap when they come to the Legislature for debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to rise this morning. I want to thank my colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—LFLA, as we like to refer to it—because he's certainly done his homework on this. Although we typically expect a really critical eye and critical comments coming specifically from him, this morning we're hearing some positive comments that I think should all call us to support and promote the bill—with, obviously, cautious reservation, as we tend to do as opposition members, as we are charged to do.

So, the bill itself: Speaker, our trail network in Ontario really is an important cultural, social and economic component of the province; something that anyone in this House who has had the opportunity to partake in and enjoy would understand not only is it a way to be further connected with the beauty of this province—the supernatural beauty, certainly, in all quadrants of the province—but also a way to connect to people. Along these

trails, you'll find little hamlets that people rely on for their economic welfare and for their livelihoods. I can't name them off the top of my head, but I know they exist, and I know they're really important components to rural Ontario and remote Ontario. Sometimes they're even lifelines, when all else fails. It's important that we pay some attention to them and promote them, and ensure that they are safeguarded and continue to play the vital role.

As opposition members and as members in the House, we have reviewed the bill. A couple of things stand out that I think could be easily remedied. One is simply in the naming of the bill and the intent of the bill. Very clearly, the bill has six schedules, one enactment, and amendments to five acts.

It proclaims Ontario Trails Week. That corresponds with the international equivalent, which is the first Saturday of June of every year.

It requires the minister to maintain an Ontario trails strategy; that's a good thing. It creates a regime for the creation of easements for the use of privately held land to be used as part of the Ontario trail network, and for the users of trails—for instance, snowmobile associations—to use a portion of the landowners' property.

Now, that's not in the description of the bill. If I might steal this from my colleague who, very helpfully—thank you. The purpose of the bill: What I'd like to do, for the benefit of the members, is to match this schedule that creates a regime for creating easements, which is really the most mechanical portion of the bill, to the purpose.

The purposes of the bill are:

"1. To increase awareness about and encourage the use of trails.

"2. To enhance trails and the trail experience.

"3. To protect trails for today's generation and future generations.

"4. To recognize the contribution that trails make to quality of life...."

Nothing in the introduction of the bill states the creation of this easement portion. That should be clearly articulated. That, I guess, is what we're talking about today. The bill should have had broader consultation. In the description of the bill, that should have been clearly articulated. That's where I think there has been a lot of confusion.

We've heard clarity from the member from LFLA, but even some of those in his own caucus have been confused about it. I hope that those members themselves will, at some point, take the lead from the member and dispel some of those myths, because it's really important that people understand what this bill does.

Speaker, we have in Ontario somewhere around 30,000 kilometres of trails in the trail network. That's enormous; that is a huge network of trails that connect communities.

One thing that I think we should be cognizant of is the competing jurisdictions that also have wonderful trail networks. My riding is in southwestern Ontario. In Windsor and Essex county, we're able to easily connect with trail networks in Michigan. Just a little cursory research

that I did, just prior to getting up here: If you buy a Michigan trail pass, it costs you somewhere around \$45 a year to access their network of trails. I'm not exactly sure how many kilometres it would be, or miles, but it certainly could be comparable, given the size of the state of Michigan.

In Ontario, an annual fee for a trail pass ranges somewhere from \$180 to \$260 a year. That's a little bit cost-prohibitive, especially when you're trying to entice folks to come here. Visitors from all jurisdictions, when they look at the cost of the trail pass—it's prohibitive to access it. We should look at somehow making it, potentially, a little bit more affordable for those to come in. We could probably increase the numbers of people who take advantage of these trails, and, again, get a lot more recognition and promotion of the trails.

I've even heard some criticism from folks from Ontario who say, "Listen, they just keep jacking up the price on the trail passes, and we can't afford to go," given the cost of gas and the cost of buying machines—snowmobiles, ATVs and UTVs—these days. You're looking at tens of thousands of dollars if you're going to get a decent machine—something that, at some point in my life, Speaker, I'd love to be able to take advantage of, although I don't have the time to enjoy it.

0930

I know there are those in Ontario who really make it a family event, something that they all partake in and something that they invest in. Again, if we look at the contribution to the economy that our ATV, snowmobile and UTV associations and users make every year, it's quite large. It's something that deserves our attention, something that deserves our promotion.

I'm happy to see that this bill adds some clarity to the use of the trails for landowners and those who use them. Again, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington did a really good job in dispelling some of those myths.

One of the things that we would like to see—and I think members get the sense that this will receive all-party support; at least, it certainly will from our party—although the bill creates legal clarity in the relationship between landowners and trail users, there's poor communication and confusion that has prevailed around the relationship between owners and trail users.

We've seen this time and time again. I was walking out of here the other day, contemplating the job that we do and wondering when we can ever get to a point where the government can get a bill right the first time. It's so rare in this place that we see that they get it right. We've seen bills come back just months after they were introduced and passed by the majority government, where they've missed a couple of words and it's totally transformed the intent and the mechanisms of the bill. This is getting pretty close, although we think with a little bit more consultation, they could have actually gotten it right, right off the bat—something that doesn't waste any of our time, something that doesn't waste the time of proponents or opponents of the bill because there's been

broad consultation, and all of that has been worked out prior to it hitting the floor here in the Legislature.

We don't think that that is quite where this bill is. We know that it's going to need some minor tweaking, but after that, we've proposed—and our critic for agriculture from Timiskaming–Cochrane has asked—that the government be strategic about where they potentially travel the bill to talk to those stakeholders. We know that there has been a long history of rural Ontario being shut out of consultation when it comes to provincial decisions and land utilization. This is a way that they can make amends and show that there is some good faith and some partnership with rural Ontario.

That's something, again, that my colleague from LFLA was very clear about. He hopes that this ushers in a new era of consultation between the province and rural Ontario, something that's desperately needed because it avoids the confusion and the backlash that has the potential of derailing important bills like this.

I'm happy to stand in support of the bill today. I'd like to see it go through with some minor clarifications, a little bit of tweaking; but ultimately, we're quite happy that this is seeing its way through.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm glad to respond to the member from Essex. I think he raised some valid points.

I just want to say that the legislation before us really is critically important in establishing protection for our trail system going forward for the next 20 or 30 years. We sometimes forget; we invest billions of dollars in road infrastructure and public transit infrastructure, but we don't appreciate the need to make investments in our trail infrastructure.

You think, in going forward, when our young pages reach your age, Madam Speaker, what will they have to treasure? The most vulnerable part of that legacy is probably our natural environment, our ecosystem; and our trails are an integral spine through our ecosystem that we have to protect.

That is what this bill does. It tries to ensure that these trails—80,000 kilometres of trails—are there for our pages' children and their children, because it is an investment in the future health and the economy of this province.

We sometimes think that the trail investment is like a weekend-type investment. We need to build on this bill to continue to have everybody in Ontario appreciate our trails. I would ask all the pages, all the members—and some of them already do—to walk your local trail. Volunteer at your local trail. You all have one. It's good for your health, it's good for the local economy and it's good for your future. Adopt the local trail. Go and volunteer this weekend. I challenge the pages: Find out where your local trail is.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. That's the first time in this chamber that you in

that chair have called on the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to speak, and I'm really honoured to be here when you—how could I not be here, right?

I'm going to get to speak to this bill, hopefully in the near future. I always thank the members for their contributions to this debate, but I particularly also want to recognize my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for trying to clarify something that is very important in this bill. This is where the government, I believe—and I'll articulate this in a more wholesome way when I get to speak myself. I think the government, because it didn't consult prior to the adoption and the tabling of this bill has, by its own neglect, created much of the firestorm surrounding this bill with respect to private landowners, particularly, obviously, in rural Ontario as it affects me, and more specifically for those rural landowners who have a snowmobile trail traversing their property. It has certainly caused a great deal of consternation in my county of Renfrew and in the portion of the district of Nipissing that I represent as well.

I'll have that opportunity when I'm speaking. I have also written a column of my own for the local press so that the members of my constituency have a little background on how we feel about this, but I will have a chance to more completely articulate that at a later time.

With the few seconds I have left, I just want to make sure that—and to what my colleague said—these people across the hall have to remember that you measure twice, cut once, get the bill right and make sure the necessary components are there to alleviate some of these problems in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have a few moments to be able to comment on behalf of Hamilton Mountain and to my seatmate, the member from Essex.

Within our province, we're so greatly blessed. It has been said that we have over 80,000 kilometres of trails throughout the province. That's different types of trails. I know that the member from Essex was talking about 30,000 kilometres of trails, and that's motorized trails that could take snowmobiles and different motorized vehicles.

Our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has pointed out very clearly the concerns with landowners and the easements that are not, to my understanding, part of this bill but have become part of a problem with the government not really doing the full consultation and not spelling things out correctly in the bill.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said very clearly that the property owners have nothing to gain and everything to lose when it comes to the easements. It's something that I think we need to make sure we get right and make sure that we have these conversations while we have this debate period. Hopefully, the government will allow some of the amendments that will be brought forward, I'm sure, from New Democrats as well as the Conservatives, to make sure that we get it right and that we reward our trails and that we reward the landowners who

so generously give up their land and protect that so that people across this province can enjoy it.

Thank you very much for the time. It's always a pleasure to follow up and to comment for my seatmate, the member from Essex.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I may have related this story before: I grew up in central Etobicoke, in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, and lived in a number of places as a kid, but at one point I lived close to the Humber River and a beautiful green space in our community called James Gardens. Our family used the trails along the Humber River quite often and quite extensively. In fact, I have a picture that hangs in my mum's home of me as a kid—I've got to be about 10 or 11 years old, posing with my sister in this photo—and we're along the Humber River with the trails in the background. As a family, we used to make use of those trails quite often. I don't make as good use of them as I probably should any longer so this is a good reminder for me to do more of that.

All this is to say, I really value our trails across the province, but, speaking as someone who represents a suburban community, the trails play an important role not just outside of our city but within our municipalities. Our family is a prime example of a family that valued that.

Of course, I think this bill not only allows us to promote trails, and in so doing, engage and involve more people—people like me who should be making more use of those trails—not just because it's a wonderful natural resource and it's a wonderful resource for families, as I described, but also because it supports health and wellness in our communities.

When I think about aspects of this particular bill that I think are positive, I think the classification system is an excellent way of making people aware of which trails are fit for them and which are not; it makes it more inviting—recognizing trails of distinction. I think protecting private property rights is also very, very important, so I appreciate that those measures are in the bill.

There's a lot of comment from the opposite side about lack of consultation. There was consultation on this bill. I don't have time to get into that; I'm sure there will be another opportunity.

All that said, I think this is a wonderful bill and I'm glad to have a chance to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My colleague corrected me; I did state that there are 30,000 kilometres of trails. There are 80,000 total kilometres of trails; 30,000, I believe, that are accessible by motorized vehicles: ATVs, snowmobiles, UTVs.

In Windsor and Essex county, we don't have access to those types of trails. We just rip up and down the lake when it freezes over. It would be nice, actually; I'm sure folks would take advantage of it if there were, but I guess just our topography and geography aren't conducive to a

network of trails. That's why so many people from south-western Ontario head up north to chase the snow in the winter, to be able to make use of them. Again, they're a really important economic driver for northern Ontario.

Thanks to all members who spoke to the bill. I do want to pitch a question out there. I don't know if members of the government are going to pass up the next rotation or not, but maybe members of the opposition can clarify: One of the questions that we have is that—easements can “be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body.” Again, our critic the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has asked that this clause be clarified for the benefit of property owners and stakeholders. Who is an “eligible body?” Who is “another eligible body?” That should be clearly identified. It should be, I guess, broad enough to make sure that it's not prohibitive to folks who currently use and plan to use the network of trails and make sure that the process is technically clear and easy to take advantage of.

That being said, again, I'm happy to stand in support of Ontario trails, the network, and those who maintain them and promote them. They're a vital component to our economic prosperity and something that we should all be proud of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various acts. This bill is very important for my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka; trails are very important for Parry Sound–Muskoka, which is, I would say, the preeminent tourism area in the province of Ontario. Of course, Muskoka, a couple of years ago, was rated the number one jurisdiction in the world for—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a lot of chatter in the chamber. I'm going to ask the members from the government side that if you need to have a conversation with your colleagues please take it outside or do the indoor voice. Thank you.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you. As I was saying, Muskoka was rated as the number one tourism destination in the world by National Geographic magazine a few years ago, and Parry Sound has the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve and the beautiful east coast of Georgian Bay. It really is quite spectacular, and I encourage all members to visit the area. But for me, personally, trails are important. I remember, in my nomination meeting speech, talking about the importance of trails.

Of course, in Parry Sound–Muskoka we have snowmobile trails—and I'm going to come back to that in a minute—which are really important, but we have hiking trails, we have ATV trails. We have trails like the Seguin trail, which was the old J.R. Booth Railway line. We have some great cross-country ski trails.

This winter, I was able to go cross-country skiing at Georgian Nordic trails, just northeast of Parry Sound. I've skied many times at the Bracebridge resource centre.

I've skied at Arrowhead Provincial Park, which also has the famous skating trail that is over a couple of kilometres long.

This bill has caused problems in my riding.

It was an awful year for snowmobiling this year with the winter conditions we had. I have a couple of snowmobiles and had a couple of permits for the province of Ontario which I didn't actually get to use this year, mainly because of the conditions. When I had time, the conditions weren't right.

We've had negative reactions to misconceptions about this bill, and I want to get some of them on the record in the limited time I have.

I have the township of Perry, just north of the town of Huntsville, writing to the Premier with regard to Bill 100, saying:

"Whereas the provincial government has had the first reading of Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act; and

"Whereas with the possibility of Bill 100 proceeding further, private property owners are in the process of revoking land use permits with our local snowmobile clubs and other OFSC snowmobile clubs throughout the province, thereby causing safety and economic concerns for our area; and

"Whereas the harmony between snowmobile clubs and private property owners is being undermined by the act;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the township of Perry petition the provincial government to take the necessary steps to immediately resolve the issue of snowmobile trails being closed due to the fact that private property owners feel their property rights may be taken away by the passage of Bill 100...."

I have also received a letter from the Snowcrest Riders, an independent snowmobile club in the Gravenhurst area. They wrote me a good letter with their concerns. I want to get the complete letter on the record. It's from Mr. Bob Clarke, who is the president:

"Hello Mr. Miller.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting you a few times. I have been the president of Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club for the past nine seasons. We have been very successful and you spoke of our organization in the House on November 4, 2013. We are the last Canadian snowmobile club to receive the International Snowmobile Club of the Year award and be inducted into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame in 2013.

"I felt it very important that I inform you that Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club in Gravenhurst will have trail closures as of April 1, 2016. One trail closure affects our Top D trail south that features the bridge that crosses all four lanes of Highway 11, and our Beaver Creek bridge that was opened in February 2010. Combined, these bridges cost \$1.4 million, and were largely funded by provincial and federal dollars.

"As you are already aware, there have been a number of snowmobile trails in Muskoka that have been closed due to concerns landowners have with the proposed Bill 100, Ontario Trails Act. I anticipate there will be more closures to come. I have been on a small committee with our OFSC district 7, that has had some dialogue with you.

"A number of the local businesses that rely on snowmobile tourism dollars are suffering. We also have the Trans Canada Trail system for hiking and biking that I fear will be affected as well.

"I have had discussions with some of our landowners, and I want to share some of the dialogue with you. See below.

"I spoke to a Snowcrest landowner yesterday. Landowners have informed Snowcrest Riders by letter that they will be removing permission for use of their property as of April 1, 2016 due to concerns with Bill 100.

"Their concern is that even though the minister states that easements will be voluntary and that no government is going to impose an easement on their property without their consent, the bill is not clear on this. Their concern is that because the Bill 100 does not have this wording, it is open to interpretation. Therefore, they believe that our current minister may interpret the Bill 100 to state easements are voluntary, but the next minister may have a different interpretation, because the wording is not clear. Therefore, these landowners do not care about what we say, or what the minister's statement said, they want this minister's wording in Bill 100, so it is clear for all.

0950

"Mr. Miller, the landowners I have talked to want section 12 of proposed Bill 100 to be amended to include the simple wording below that Minister Michael Coteau has already stated."

That is, "'an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so.'

"Add the above statement from the minister to section 12 of Bill 100, and we may address the concerns of the landowner."

He goes on to say, "My personal note is, why does Bill 100 need to mention easements, period?"

"There is already a process available in every municipality regarding establishing easements on private property.

"I understand the minister has offered to make available staff or himself, to speak to concerned groups if requested. I will wait for your reply, to determine if I will be making that request."

I think that states very clearly how the bill is having the effect of closure of some snowmobile trails, and some really important ones. There has been a lot of money spent on the bridge crossing the four-lane Highway 11, which was an amazing accomplishment for the Snowcrest Riders, to get that built.

As the member from Lennox-Frontenac—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Norm Miller: —Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington stated—he's got the longest riding association name in the Legislature, I think—there are some benefits to this bill, which have been largely overshadowed by the concerns with the easement section. There's the doing

away with the limit of \$1,000 for suing for damage, for trespassing on private property, so that's an increased protection for property owners. There's a change in the limit on fines for trespassers on private property. It goes from \$2,000 to \$10,000. That's more protection for private property owners. There's a reduction in liability, and clarification of liability, for landowners. That's also a positive that is in this bill.

I just want to get on the record that trails are really important for the economy of Parry Sound–Muskoka and for rural Ontario. I hope the government will do what the snowmobile club has asked for and put the statement the minister has made into the bill. That's a fairly simple ask, and I think it will make lot of landowners feel more comfortable with this bill.

That will make me a lot happier too, because I want to see the trails open, not just for personal use but for the benefit of the economy of rural Ontario, for the benefit of Parry Sound–Muskoka and for all those volunteers who are involved in the various clubs, and in particular, the snowmobile clubs, which are huge in Parry Sound–Muskoka. I would like to see this work out.

I'll just get on the record in my last minute that the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs has a similar ask. They say, "Minister, to be clear"—I'm just taking one little section out—"the OFSC supports the elements within Bill 100 which will provide landowners and non-profit recreational trail organizations with enhanced protection and rights.

"We do, however, believe that Bill 100 would be much more palatable to our important landowner partners should section 12 be amended to provide greater clarity to the areas that are causing concern. As a consequence, we would be very supportive of any process for consultation and action that would accomplish this."

Madam Speaker, I say to the government: Make sure, when you do your consulting—and the committee that receives this bill after second reading—that you visit rural Ontario and listen to the landowners and listen to those people who are so important to keeping our trails open in the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I'm not entirely familiar with the statement of the minister that he referred to, but I actually have to agree with him. If the minister has said there is an approach that will be of consequence, and that people should rely on the statement of a minister for ongoing administration of an act or overseeing of an act—the member has correctly said if you think that the statement is of consequence, is going to make a difference to landowners and to the act itself, then consideration should be given to putting it into the bill.

Ministers come and go; governments come and go. If in fact there's a stability, an assurance about the future

that landowners need to be part of this process, then what the member is asking for is entirely reasonable, something that should be discussed as this bill goes into committee.

The other day, my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about the vulnerability, the fragility, of the trail system, that to a great extent it depends on the confidence that landowners have in the system to run well and to not impose undue burdens on them. It is not that hard to end a trail system.

I've been on the Bruce Trail—a gorgeous place—and I know there were times that I was going through farmers' fields. People, happily, have been pretty respectful. I didn't see litter; I didn't see any damage. Frankly, if the farmers hadn't allowed people to be on their land, the utility of that trail would have been dramatically reduced.

So putting in measures that will actually ensure comfort and confidence on the part of the landowners makes tons of sense for the landowners and for those who have the great and wonderful opportunity—the privilege—to wander through that countryside.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to be able to comment on the remarks by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. I like to refer to him as "the member from my mother's cottage," up near Dorset, Ontario.

Dorset is a centrepiece of great trails up in Parry Sound–Muskoka. There is a section of the narrows between lower Trading Bay and upper Trading Bay that rarely freezes over in the winter. Particularly in the spring, as they're sitting at the narrows Restaurant and having a beer, the snowmobilers come by and they skip across the open water from the frozen section of upper Trading into lower Trading. The local volunteer firefighter is also a salvage scuba diver, where every year he makes a few extra shekels by recovering some of the snowmobiles that have gone down in that section.

It's great fun and it is an important tourism piece in the neighbourhood that I'm all too familiar with.

I appreciate the member's advocacy in this area, particularly around the issue around easements and how the easements will be arrived at. It's so very important, as the member from Lanark was talking about, that this will create an opportunity for voluntary discussions between the parties to sort out easements and protect the opportunities for the trails all the way across the north and rural Ontario.

Of course, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I know what an important aspect in this bill and how it's been received—the consultation that we've had with various stakeholders across the province. I support very much the idea that we need to hear more from the affected communities. We'll talk with our House leaders to see if there is an opportunity so that we can see a bit of rural Ontario have more direct input by those who are most directly affected by this bill, as we go through the committee stage.

I appreciate the member's remarks, and I listened very carefully.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. If I may, I would like to congratulate you on your new role as Deputy Speaker. I think you'll do an excellent job. It's great to see you in the chair.

My colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka raised a number of very important number issues regarding Bill 100. I'm really pleased that we're talking about all of the great trails that are in our ridings. I wouldn't want to compete against Parry Sound–Muskoka, although I must say that in Dufferin–Caledon we have some beautiful trails in our own right: two major sections of the Bruce Trail, of course, the Trans Canada Trail, as well as a personal favourite, the Island Lake trail.

Section 12: There is a reason why people are concerned about section 12 in Bill 100. And as the member very reasonably articulated, there is a solution. We're already hearing rumours about cabinet shuffles and people being moved around. So while we have a statement from the current minister, it would be very helpful to actually put it in legislation. We all know that ministers move beyond their current portfolio. We leave this place; we move on. This legislation still remains on the books. So the clearer that we can make it, and the less opportunity for any confusion on the part of the landowners as well as the trail users and the organizations—it's incumbent on us to do that. I think this is the opportunity to do that, when we move it into committee. Let's make sure that the minister, who has already tried to clarify publicly how he want its changed—let's put it in the legislation and make sure that future generations and future users aren't trying to interpret what we were doing when we passed Bill 100.

1000

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to stand here to contribute to the debate after the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about this bill.

I think we're all in agreement that this bill is a positive step in the direction to bring together trail users, trail owners and maybe trailblazers. Doing that is a very productive thing, because there are people who are naturalists, there are people who want to have some physical activity; and to travel Ontario through trails in a natural setting is certainly a wonderful experience that people look forward to.

Increasing awareness and encouraging the use of trails are what this bill is about. It's to enhance trails and the trail experience, which we all agree should be done. Then it also wants to protect trails from today's generation for future generations. I think that's really important as well—maintenance and the overall protection of the use of the trails.

As they get used more often, we want to make sure those trails are sustained and they still maintain their inherent natural traits, so that they're not overused and abused, so to speak. But it is a very good thing that it's

opened up the discussion about easements and the voluntary piece of that, so that landowners can have the ability to make that decision based on conversations with the minister and people who use the trails.

It's a productive way to put a bill forward. I do appreciate that. I also agree that if the minister is going to make a statement and commit to something, it would give peace of mind to put that item in this bill so that it doesn't go challenged in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I think the wrap-up is needed. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Beaches–East York, Dufferin–Caledon, Toronto–Danforth and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

I'd like to use this opportunity to thank our private landowners because without those private landowners, we just wouldn't have a trails network in the province of Ontario. They don't benefit from allowing a trail on the property; they do it out of the goodness of their heart. I'm sure in many cases they see the benefit of having trails in general, but they personally don't benefit.

The landowners are asking for something fairly simple, I think, and that is this statement: "An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so." I think that's a fairly simple ask. I would really like to see the government put that into the bill, as the landowners are asking for that.

It's obvious that there was a fair amount of consultation done before the bill was introduced, but perhaps representation of some of the landowners was somehow missed. I would suggest, when the bill goes and has its committee work done, that the committee travel to parts of rural and northern Ontario to make it easy for landowners to add their comments to what they would like to see changed, if any parts of the bill—that they're given that opportunity, and they don't have to travel to Toronto to do that. That is my ask of the government.

Trails are very important in my riding and they're important for the province. I'd hate to see trail closures that don't need to happen. That will be bad for the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 100 here this morning.

I have heard a lot about Bill 100 in my riding. As you know, I represent a beautiful riding in eastern Ontario, Prince Edward–Hastings, which stretches from the limestone shores of Lake Ontario in Prince Edward county all the way up through Belleville, through beautiful Centre Hastings and the Tweed, Madoc and Marmora area.

We've got some beautiful lakes there. Stoco Lake: There are some great trails around Stoco Lake, in the GTA—the other GTA, the greater Tweed area, we call that. And then stretching up north into North Hastings as

well, there are some magnificent trail systems stretching all the way through there.

The entire system is actually managed by the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance. I know they have received some funding in the past from upper levels of government, and they're doing a great job of making sure those trails are some of the best trails not just in Ontario but in the world. They are very, very important for businesses in my region, for tourism in my region, and for sportsmen in Prince Edward–Hastings as well. People come from far and wide.

I heard the member from Essex talking earlier this morning about the fact that he can just go across the top of the lake, because he doesn't have a trail system there, but he's more than welcome any time. I know he's been to my region before for some walleye fishing, but the trail system in eastern Ontario is unbelievable as well. There are actually 700 kilometres of trail in the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance, as I say, stretching from that limestone bed all the way into the granite in the north of North Hastings and Bancroft, the mineral capital of the world.

I was very pleased to have the Bancroft chamber of commerce here earlier this week on Prince Edward–Hastings day to talk about the Rockhound Gemboree, which is world-famous. If you have a four-wheeler, you should stop up in the summer, take the trail to Bancroft and check out the mineral museum that's there. It's first-class and you can see some of the great minerals that have been mined over the centuries up in North Hastings.

The thing is that this bill, Bill 100, has created a little bit of confusion out there—a lot of confusion, in some cases. I think what needs to happen is that there needs to be a public relations strategy on behalf of the government to ensure that all landowners understand exactly what is being proposed in Bill 100, because the confusion does exist.

I agree with the premise of Bill 100, that there should be a little bit more surety on behalf of landowners, and the trails organizations as well, when it comes to the easement issue. There are those in certain segments of the community that believe that the easement is going to be forced on them as a result of Bill 100. That's not the case. They're not going to be forced to agree to anything that they don't want to agree to.

As was mentioned earlier by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, if we didn't have the agreements with the landowners, we wouldn't have the trail system that we have in eastern Ontario right now. But, again, I just want to stress: No one is going to have their arms tied behind their back and be forced to sign an easement to have a trail running through their property. For decades, these landowners have agreed. What this bill intends to do, as far as I can tell, is add some confidence to the groups that are running the trails or maintaining the trails and add some confidence for the landowner as well in agreeing to an easement over a set period of time.

One of the stories that I was told by one of the organizations that operates the trails is this: There was a beautiful piece of property that a trail was running

through, and on that piece of property there was a stream or a small waterway that went through the person's property. The snowmobile organization wanted to build a bridge over that stream so that the four-wheelers or the snowmobiles in the wintertime could pass over that. There's quite a cost involved with that, Madam Speaker. It's not just a couple of hundred bucks; it's several thousand dollars to build a bridge up to code over a stream like that.

What happened was, the club had an agreement with the landowner to build the bridge over the stream. I believe it was a couple of hundred thousand dollars to build this bridge. After the bridge was built, the landowner said, "No, we're not going to let you use that property anymore." So as you can see, the organization has put out the capital—a lot of money—and the next thing you know, we're not allowed to use this section of the trail any longer. We want to protect the clubs from this type of thing happening.

On the other hand, we want to protect the property owners as well, and future property owners. If you own a glorious piece of land up on Stoco Lake, Madam Speaker, and you have a handshake agreement with a trails club to use that piece of property, and then you decide you're going to leave Stoco Lake to move back to the city—I don't know anyone who has ever done that; it usually works the other way around. But if you were going to sell your property, that actual easement would be registered with the land registry office so that when that potential new landowner comes in to purchase that property, they'll see that there's an easement on that property for five years, if that's what the agreement was, or 10 years.

If you bought that property and then you found out there's a trail system running through your property and you have an easement on your land registry, you won't be surprised. You'll know when your lawyers, who are doing the real estate deal, look up all of the details on that piece of property at the land registry office. They'll know that there is an easement there and no one will be surprised by that.

Unfortunately, I think what happened in this case is that—the government did it with the best of intentions, again. They brought forward Bill 100 with the best of intentions, but maybe didn't communicate early enough in the process with those who were integral to making sure that this worked. That allowed a couple of groups to spread some information out there that wasn't entirely correct and has a lot of people worried and contacting my office. I haven't had droves of people, but I certainly have had a few concerned landowners who have written and called my office with really strong concerns about their land being taken away from them. That's not the case when it comes to this bill.

I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He's my neighbour. We share trails in that Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance. Of course, he'll promote Silent Lake or some of the other great lakes that are in his area—mine are better—but the trail is beautiful and it stretches all the way through. He's done a lot of work on this bill and he's

also done a lot of work in trying to correct some of the issues that are being miscommunicated to the public in regard to this bill. I really think, in a lot of cases, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has done a better job than the government has in straightening out some of the miscommunication that exists in the community.

I give him full marks for his efforts in making sure that this bill, which is well-intentioned, ensures that we continue to have the best trail system in Ontario, in North America and even in the world—something that is a little bit more concrete and something we know is going to exist—and that those agreements are going to be in place. It gives some surety to the whole process so that our sportsmen can enjoy those trails. They're great for walking, for horseback riding and, of course, for the use of all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles.

People in my neck of the woods, that's what they do. They buy a four-wheeler, they buy a utility vehicle, they buy a snowmobile and they look forward to the fact that when the snow comes, they're going to get out their Arctic Cat or their Ski-Doo and they're going to have a great time on the trails in our region. It's big business. There are people who come from all over to use the trails in eastern Ontario.

I commend the government for bringing forward Bill 100 to make sure that the agreements that we have with our landowners are there for years and years to come; that those who are promoting Prince Edward–Hastings, North Hastings and Centre Hastings as a great place to come and spend their tourism dollars—that those are there for years to come; and that we can continue to support our local businesses in our region. We have many, many bed and breakfasts, hotels and restaurants that depend on people coming in on their snowmobiles and their ATVs, or just enjoying the great outdoors in one of the most beautiful places in Ontario to spend a long weekend. That, of course, is Prince Edward–Hastings, Ontario.

Thank you for the time this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it is almost 10:15, we're going to recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and welcome the representatives from the eye physicians and surgeons, who are here for their annual lobby day. In the gallery today are Dr. Kylen McReelis, Dr. Andrew Budning, Dr. Tim Hillson and executive director Amanda Meek. I hope that the members will take the time to come and speak with them this evening in the dining room. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today our page captain is Sabrina Arcuri, from the great riding of Oak Ridges–

Markham. In the east members' gallery, we are joined by her grandmother, who is Reza Moridi's lovely wife, Pari Moridi; the mother of Sabrina, Marjan Arcuri, and her sister Sara Arcuri.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Today, I think, is a very special day in the House. We all collectively, as members, hosted and welcomed the first-ever OPSEU corrections lobby day. We had a very good breakfast with many correctional workers.

I want to introduce Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU; Monte Vieselmeyer, who is the chair of the management employee relations committee; Greg Arnold, who is a MERC member; Alex Sawicki, who is also a MERC member; Sean Dunn, who is a member of the provincial health and safety committee; Mike Lundy, who is the vice-chair of the provincial health and safety committee and local president for Thunder Bay jail; Shawn Bradshaw, local president for Thunder Bay Correctional Centre; Denis Collin, who is the local union president for the Ottawa–Carleton Detention Centre; Scott McIntyre, who is a Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services probation and parole officer, and the probation and parole health and safety worker rep; and Danielle Du Sablon, who is also a probation and parole officer, and secretary of OPSEU Local 221.

Speaker, most importantly, I want to welcome all the brave and hard-working correctional officers and probation and parole officers who are with us here in this House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome Joel Bissonnette, from Sarnia–Lambton, who is the corrections officer in charge of the union in Sarnia.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is also my pleasure and privilege to welcome the correctional officers and probation and parole officers from across Ontario. I have a long list; I'll get to it.

Welcome to Todd Snider, Joel Bissonnette, Randy Simpraga, Wendy Krusto, Danielle Du Sablon, Lorraine Skitch, Rebecca Currie, Ryan Graham, Chad Oldfield, John Mengia, Denise Sidsworth, Mike Kirlaw, Glenna Caldwell, Gord Longhi, Autumn Butsch, Chris Butsch, Sean Dunn, Chris Jackel, Alex Sawicki, Richard Dionne, Todd Hockey, Denis Collin, Jonny Coffey, Vanessa Thompson, Shawn Bradshaw, Monte Vieselmeyer, Kathy Hoffman, Dianna Fedun, Joy Wallace, Rob Nimer, Jim Steenson, Jason Mushynski, Patricia Giroux, Scott McIntyre, Chantal Breton, Ken Steinbrunner, Joey Guillemette, Ian Turpin, Barb Friday, Raff Tassone, Kyla Moen, James Nowe, Mike Lundy and Greg Arnold. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From my riding of Barrie, I would like to welcome Dr. Jonathan Douglas, president of the Ontario Psychological Association.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to again introduce Andree Martin from CUPE, with the paramedics, and Todd Snider, with OPSEU corrections division.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to introduce, in the west gallery, Craig Foye, staff lawyer for the Hamilton

Community Legal Clinic; and Laura Cattari, writer and community advocate. She also sits on the round table for poverty reduction in Hamilton.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I also want to welcome the corrections workers and probation and parole officers, and adult and youth workers who are here. Some of those from Thunder Bay that have not yet been welcomed are Raff Tassone, Rob Gordon and Barb Friday. Welcome to all of you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would also like to welcome the CUPE paramedics I met with this morning: Randy Barnes, Adam Payne, along with Andree Martin. Welcome, wherever you may be.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I also want to welcome CUPE paramedics to the House today. Thank you for coming out.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the east gallery today are C.J. Jeyanathan and Conner Robertson. C.J. is the president of the Don Valley East youth riding association. Welcome, C.J.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today CUPE paramedic Chris Day, who I'll be meeting with later this afternoon, along with three of his colleagues joining us today at Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce two paramedics who are here as part of paramedic day and thank them for their life-saving work: Jim Simpson and Michael Kruse.

I'd also like to introduce two visitors who are here to spend a day with their favourite MPP: Debbie Levere and Sylvia Giordino.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Antoin Diamond, from the Bruce Trail; Patrick Connor, from the Ontario Trails Council; Sylvain Roy, from the Ontario Psychological Association; and Gareth Jones, from the correctional officers' OPSEU union.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today's page captain is MacFarlane Benham from Kitchener–Conestoga. Here to watch him hard at work are his mom, Jenny MacFarlane Benham, and his father, Jeff Benham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome correction officers Randy Simpraga, from my riding of Essex; Kyla Moen, from Kenora; and James Nowe, from Kenora.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome John Mengia, who is the president of Local 252 Niagara Detention Centre, OPSEU.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the correctional officers and paramedics from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I'd also like to welcome Dr. McReelis, Dr. Hillson, Dr. Nijhawan and Amanda Meek, from the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I see in the gallery, from my area, Jeff van Pelt and Tiffany Balducci, here from CUPE Ontario on behalf of the paramedics. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming my wife, Pari Moridi; my granddaughter Sara Arcuri; and my daughter, Marjan Arcuri.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome paramedic Mr. Laurie Le Maitre to Queen's Park today. I'll be meeting with him to discuss paramedic issues right after question period.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today Dr. Sylvain Roy and Ms. Jan Kasperski—a constituent of mine—from the Ontario Psychological Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome all paramedics here from Durham region, and paramedics from York region, since that's where my daughter works as a paramedic. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome my good friend Fred Hahn today, the president of CUPE Ontario—welcome to Queen's Park—and, along with him, all the paramedics who are in the House for their lobby day. Welcome and thank you for your service to our communities.

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

With us today in the Speaker's gallery is the new consul general of India to Toronto, Mr. Dinesh Bhatia. Please welcome our new consul general.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just to correct my record, this morning during debate on Bill 100, there were comments made that were not intended for, or directed at, anybody in this House but for people outside this House. I just want to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's a clarification.

I would also remind members—I can't read minds. So if I hear unparliamentary language, I'm making the assumption that two things can happen. One is that you can try to say something indirectly that you cannot say directly. You cannot say anything in terms of quotes or whatever.

The clarification is accepted, as long as it was not a quote with an intent to make any kind of unparliamentary language. So thank you for that clarification.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Today, we are joined by correctional officers and staff from around the province. They are here to tell you about the growing crisis in corrections, a crisis that this government continues to ignore. The poor quality of Ontario's jails and their persistent lockdowns are putting correctional officers' lives at risk. We've already had an officer

taken hostage at the Thunder Bay jail, and the government's response was minimal.

How many more correctional officers have to be injured; how many more correctional officers have to be taken hostage before we see serious action from this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to welcome the officers to the Legislature today. I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is going to want to say more, Mr. Speaker.

We're committed to transformation in corrections in Ontario. It is what we believe in. It's why we're hiring more officers. Since 2013, we've hired 710 new correctional officers. We'll be hiring 2,000 more correctional officers over the next three years.

We understand there is a need for more personnel. We also understand that there is a need for support for training. We've trained an additional 138 new correctional officers. Those trainings are under way. But beyond that, we recognize that there is a need for an overall look at how we approach corrections in this province, and that is under way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier. I remind the Premier of my visit to the Thunder Bay correctional facility. I could not believe that working conditions could exist in Ontario like I saw at the Thunder Bay jail. The mayor of Thunder Bay called it a "rathole." The infrastructure in our correctional facilities in many parts of the province is completely inadequate.

I'm sure the Premier would never work in these conditions that I saw, so I repeat, for the third time, my challenge and question to the Premier. As I've done before, I'm asking, will the Premier visit the jail in Thunder Bay, the correctional facility in Thunder Bay, to truly appreciate the conditions? And if Thunder Bay is too far, will the Premier visit any correctional facility? It's not good enough to say you went four or five years ago for ribbon-cutting. Will you see the conditions today? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason the transformation is under way, the reason officers are being hired, the reason that in the minister's mandate letter there is a focus on transformation in corrections is that I have already visited. I understand there is a real need for change in corrections.

I also recognize that in this country provincial jurisdictions are working under challenging circumstances, given decisions that were made at the federal level. We need to focus on how we prepare people who are in our correctional institutions for reintegration into society. We need to make sure that conditions corrections officers are working in are safe. That's why the transformation is the focus of the minister, and that's why the transformation is under way.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: A visit years and years ago isn't good enough, and I repeat my challenge: Will the Premier visit a correctional facility in the near future?

Now, there's a simple first-step solution that I could recommend to the Premier. The body scanners in the Toronto South Detention Centre should be in every correctional facility in Ontario immediately.

During my visit to the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, I was told by a correctional officer that the smuggling of drugs is rampant—17 Kinder eggs from one inmate were full of drugs. I've heard in other correctional facilities about ceramic knives being smuggled in.

Smokey Thomas has called on the government to take a task force beyond just Ottawa but across the whole province. This is a reasonable proposition that the government should follow.

My question is, will the government take real, meaningful steps, like setting up a task force, like having these body scanners not next year but immediately? Will you do the right thing? Will you take these steps this spring?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Interjections.

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

The Premier referred to the Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker.

On this side of the House, we've been absolutely clear on this issue, that the status quo in our correctional system cannot continue. We are very much focused on working along with our correctional partners. The fact that they're here, and the fact that we have been having very productive meetings, demonstrates that we are focused on developing solutions.

Let me be very clear: Our solutions are not what—the Leader of the Opposition, when he sat, along with the Harper government, and brought on down-on-crime policies, that has resulted in the kinds of challenges in overcrowding that we are seeing. That is not the solution that we are talking about. Neither of you are talking about the solutions that the Conservatives brought by privatizing jails in this province. Those are not the solutions we are talking about.

I invite the member opposite: Stop the rhetoric and start talking about concrete solutions that are going to result in ensuring—

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

New question.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. When the Premier was scribbling her new plan on the back of a napkin at her kitchen table, there was one glaring omission.

I appreciate that the Premier has no interest in input or consultation with other parties or—

Interjections.

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

It's very difficult to ask one side to come to order when the other side is provoking, so if you were to stop, I would be able to do something about it.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I realize input is not welcome. It's the Liberal Party's way. It's the Premier's way or the highway. But one glaring omission is about lobbying reform.

Over the last 13 years, there has been a steady stream of staff leaving the Premier's and ministers' offices to become influential lobbyists, lobbyists who in turn wrote big cheques to the Liberal Party from their new employers.

Although the Premier claims that she will put a stop to the donations, it doesn't solve all the problems. It's inadequate; it's short.

Mr. Speaker, when the cash dries up, what is stopping Liberal friends from influencing the government's decisions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition knows that we have made changes in terms of the rules surrounding lobbyists. One of the questions that we have before us is, are there other changes that need to be made? I would be happy to hear from the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —if he has proposals on how he thinks the lobbying process should be changed. We have made changes. We have tightened up those rules. I would be happy to hear any input that he has on that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Maybe the Premier forgot the page of her napkin on her kitchen table.

I understand that lobbying is legitimate, but a simple cooling-off period between leaving a minister's office and working as a lobbyist makes sense. That's the standard practice in other provinces—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess maybe my signalling that I'm going after individuals hasn't come through yet. I'll reverse my politeness to a heavy hand. I don't care to do it, but I will.

Please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: It appears I've touched a sensitive topic of defending Liberal lobbyists.

We can't have senior staff advising the Premier today and then lobbying for policy changes tomorrow. There has to be a cooling-off period. If the Premier's reform

plan is so comprehensive, why has she been so silent on changing the lobbying rules in our province? Why leave these giant loopholes in the reform?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In the meeting that I had with the leaders of the opposition parties, I said to them that I was interested in hearing from them on specific changes that they thought needed to be put in place. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I specifically had the meeting with them in order to elicit that input. I still stand ready to hear their input on the substance of what they think should be in the legislation.

We will bring in two pieces of legislation, as I told them. We'll bring in the legislation in the spring around the fundraising rules, but then in the fall, we will bring in another piece of legislation that will deal with other election issues.

I'm open to their suggestions. I have said that there may be changes to the lobbying process that need to be put in place. I'd be happy to hear their concrete suggestions.

1050

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: The notion that input is welcome is laughable. The only direction we got from the Premier is that this process would be dictated by the Premier's office, run by the Liberal Party and that the opinions of everyone else don't count with this government.

I can tell you that there are numerous examples of why we need to address lobbying reform. A senior staffer leaves the energy minister's office only to take a job with a renewable energy company seeking project approval from that same minister. During that time, he personally donates to the Liberal Party 194 times. This just doesn't look right to the people of Ontario. It isn't right. They want rules. The people of Ontario want rules to be put into place to protect the public's interest.

Will the Premier commit to a lobbying cooling-off period for former government staff? Yes or no? Do you support that concept?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, no. You come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's time that the people of Ontario actually stood where the Leader of the Opposition stands. Do you support a ban on corporate donations? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. To the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not kidding. Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Does the Leader of the Opposition support a ban on union donations? Yes or no? Does the Leader of the Opposition support controls on third-party advertising? Yes or no? Does the Leader of the Opposition believe that we need to reduce the maximum—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm charged with trying to make sure that the mood is reasonable. It's not helpful when, even if you're attempting to use third person, you point at someone. You're speaking to the Chair. Point at me.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'd like to know if the Leader of the Opposition supports constraints on loans and loan guarantees. Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just when I'm able to get that directed, it starts on this side. You're not helpful either.

Please finish. Wrap up.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And does the Leader of the Opposition believe that we need to reform by-election donations? Yes or no? Let's get on with it.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Jails in Ontario are overcrowded and understaffed, and that means too many inmates and not enough corrections workers. It's not hard to see that this is a recipe for jails and a system that are unsafe for everyone. Riots and violence and even deaths have become the norm under this Liberal government's watch.

But when it comes to the new PTSD legislation, the Premier left out bailiffs and probation and parole officers, even though all corrections workers are doing their best in a system that is unsafe for them and for inmates.

When will corrections workers and inmates actually see safe jails in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I say to the corrections officers, I'm pleased that they're here.

I assume that the leader of the third party would agree with our move to hire 710 new correctional officers and 2,000 more over the next three years because we agree that there needs to be change in our corrections system. It's why the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is working on a transformation.

As he said, we are working on supports, like mental health supports, making sure that there is training, making sure there's more staff so that the environment is safer, so that corrections officers have a better environment within which to work. Also, we're creating a system that will work to rehabilitate people so that they can be reintegrated into society. That has not been the focus, certainly, from the federal level. That has not been the focus of corrections in this country. It is the focus of this government, and that's the direction that the transformation is moving in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, everybody sees the transformation that's happening in the corrections system. It speaks volumes when the Premier's minister doesn't even seem to know what's going on in jails, not even the one in his own community. Not only was he completely unaware, but he went on to deny the fact that inmates are forced to sleep in showers in the Ottawa detention centre. Not only is this inhumane, of course, but it creates an even more dangerous work environment for the corrections officers and workers in the facility.

After admitting that he was wrong, the minister then promised that inmates would no longer be sleeping in shower stalls anymore. Has the government fixed Ottawa's overcrowding? Where did all those inmates go?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On this side of the House, we are very much focused on working, along with our correctional workers, to make sure that we are bringing meaningful changes. Last year was a challenging year with labour negotiations. But Speaker, I will say to you that we have come a long way in terms of ensuring that there was no strike and that we were able to reach an agreement that all parties are satisfied with. But now, most importantly, we're working together in ensuring that we come up with a concrete action plan as to how we change the system.

What we really need to do, from all members of this House, is to come up with those ideas. It's easy to point to the problem. We all know what the challenges in the system are. A real opportunity that is in front of us is to come up with those long-lasting transformational changes that will ensure that we focus on rehabilitation and reintegration as opposed to just punishing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of actually dealing with systemic issues, what we see is things flaring up in London, in Hamilton, in Thunder Bay and in Toronto South. The Liberals chose to put their focus on taking our corrections system to the brink. This government spent millions of dollars getting ready for a strike instead of investing in solutions to fix the problems, regardless of what this minister claims.

The Liberal government has made this made-in-Ontario crisis. They made this crisis, and it is on their hands. It is bigger than just one ministry, because, for example, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care cut psychiatric beds and mental health supports—

Interjection.

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

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and those vulnerable individuals often find their way into our justice and corrections system.

Will the Premier acknowledge that when she's cutting health care, cutting education, cutting social services and

cutting public housing, she's creating brand new problems in corrections?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think this bluster undermines the good faith and goodwill that exists within our correctional system for the first time in a long, long time—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We have goodwill and a good working relationship for the first time in a long time within the correctional system from all our partners, including community partners, to actually move forward and develop a concrete action plan that will change the system. Warehousing more individuals in our corrections system is not the answer. What we need to really focus on is how to better rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals back into the community.

We have a lot of work to do to undermine the 10 years of damage that the Harper government and the Leader of the Opposition brought into our system, and to ensure—

Interjections.

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

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Does the Premier believe, Speaker, that rules governing democratic fairness should be made fairly and democratically, or does she believe that one person and one party should be making all the rules?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, here's the process that we are putting forward: We will introduce draft legislation in the spring, and then that legislation, instead of going to committee hearings after second reading, will actually go to committee hearings after first reading, if we can get agreement. That will allow for two rounds of consultation with people across the province. We will be able to have consultation and input throughout the summer and into the fall. I look forward to that.

1100

Many of the issues I raised with the leaders of the opposition parties and with the leader of the Green Party, hoping for input. I did get some input from the leader of the Green Party. I'm looking for some input from the opposition leaders. But more than that, I'm looking for input from people across the province: from experts, from academics, from members of civil society—all those people that the leader of the third party thinks we should hear from. We're looking forward to that input.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When Mike Harris arbitrarily changed election rules in 1998, the member for St. Catharines said it was an "anti-democratic strategy, hatched in the backrooms." Dalton McGuinty said, "You can't change the rules of the game without the consent of all the players involved."

Can the Premier explain why it's anti-democratic if Mike Harris does it, but if Liberals do it, it's non-partisan and consultative?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the leader of the third party is preoccupied with the process. On this side of the House, we want to get on with making the changes.

My question to the leader of the third party is, does she support the ban on union donations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are plenty of people who are out of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, that's a yes-or-no question.

Another yes-or-no question: Does the leader of the opposition support a ban on corporate donations, yes or no? What about third-party advertising rules? How about maximum spending limits on third-party advertising, yes or no?

Do we need to reduce the maximum donations? We want an answer from the leader of the third party. Does she support it or does she not support it? How about loan guarantees? Is there support for restrictions and rules around loans and loan guarantees?

The people of this province want us to get on with it, and so do we.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals conveniently pretend not to get it. We need to get the big money out of politics, obviously. It's time to ban those corporate and union donations for sure. But we need to get there with a modicum of credibility. That's the point. Deciding the rules for a democratic system in the Premier's office does not pass the smell test, end of story. It is an undemocratic process, hatched in the backrooms.

Will this Premier commit to an open, democratic process and a fast-moving panel that involves all of the major political parties, civil society, academics and non-partisan experts—the way it should be done in a true democracy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party is again talking about process. On this side, we think it's time to move forward with changes that the people expect us to do.

What I'd like to know is, does the leader of the third party believe that we need a reduction in overall spending limits in election periods and between elections, yes or no? Does the leader of the third party believe that we need new leadership and nomination campaign spending limits and donation rules, yes or no?

The time has come to move on with it. We have a perfectly democratic process through this Legislature, where we have already determined that we're going to get lots of input in a timely manner because we want this work to be done.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Over the past few weeks, many were shocked to learn that inmates

were being housed in showers at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. What's even more shocking is that the minister had to backtrack after he had denied that such conditions existed.

The community advisory board report that the ministry sat on for months last year directly called on the minister to address overcrowding in the jail. Why did the minister ignore all the evidence for so long that Ontario's corrections system is in crisis and it's leading to chaos in corrections?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, let me be absolutely clear: It is totally unacceptable to house any inmate in any shower cell. As soon as I found out that that practice had taken place, I issued a directive to ensure that that practice is permanently put to an end.

In addition, in order to deal with some of the challenges that are taking place at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre, I have created a task force, which is being led by my deputy minister. The task force had its first meeting just yesterday. It has, of course, members from my ministry but it also has representation from the union. It has community members, such as from the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Mothers Offering Mutual Support group; members from the community advisory board; and, in addition, crown and defence counsel, so that we can work together and create both near-term and long-term solutions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Deplorable conditions just don't appear overnight. The crisis in corrections may have been avoided if government officials simply listened to the pleas for help coming from the front lines.

When I raised the question about safety issues at the Toronto South Detention Centre, staff were immediately issued a warning memo on confidentiality. Speaker, that's unacceptable. Safety concerns raised by front-line staff throughout Ontario must be welcomed and encouraged. Instead, we have a government that has tried unsuccessfully to muzzle correctional staff.

My question is simply this: Will the minister show leadership and apologize on behalf of his ministry for trying to silence correctional staff who tried desperately to get this government to address safety concerns?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I said earlier, we are very much interested in developing solutions together, and I sincerely ask the member opposite—I know he intends well—to provide solutions. Let's work together to deal with this very complex problem in a manner that brings everybody together.

If his solution is, as his party has suggested in the past, to privatize jails, we absolutely reject that notion. That is not where we're going to go. We need to work together, along with our correctional workers, to find meaningful ways not only to reduce overcrowding in our jails by reforming the bail system—and the federal government has a very important role to play—but also to make sure that we've got appropriate supports within our correctional institutions and also in a community setting by

benefiting from the expertise of our probation and parole officers so that we can ensure better reintegration.

We welcome ideas and solutions. Let's work together and make it happen.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This question is to the Premier. The Premier wrote her plan for how all elections will be financed by herself, at home, two days before she met with the opposition members. It's not clear she even consulted with her own caucus. She hasn't consulted with experts, she hasn't consulted with civil society, and she certainly hasn't listened to Ontarians.

Why is she stubbornly refusing a process that includes all major political parties, civil society and non-partisan experts, and instead choosing to go it alone?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've known the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for a very long time. She used to be a school community adviser with the Toronto board of education. I know she worked in the community very well and I know that she understands how process works. I know she understands that, when there are important decisions to be made, everybody needs to do their work. Everybody needs to look at the options. Everybody needs to come forward with a synthesis of the ideas that they have looked at and to sound those out with other people and then come up with a solution.

So I'm really surprised that this member, who understands that so well, wouldn't understand that we all have to do this work. Every one of us who wants to have input into this process has to think about what the options are, has to consider those options and then has to enter into a broader process.

That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're going to bring legislation forward. We're expanding the consultation period. We want to hear input from people around the province, and we would love to hear where—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: What do you think? Tell us what you think.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How many napkins do you want us to bring?

Mr. Paul Miller: We'll bring our own napkins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just when I was ready to admonish.

Supplementary?

1110

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let's remember: In the 2016 budget, the Premier established a number of new panels. In the past, this Premier created panels on how many bottles of beer someone can buy and where they can buy them. The word "consultation" appears in the 2016 budget more than 50 times. Clearly, the problem isn't that the Premier refuses to hold consultations or conversations, or doesn't like independent panels. She needs to

remember that our democracy belongs to all of us, not the Liberal Party.

Can the Premier explain to Ontarians why she thinks she alone should be making the rules for how our democracy functions, and why she is stubbornly refusing an open, transparent consultation by establishing a fast-moving independent panel on election fairness?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I do think that this should be a democratic process. I think that having the legislative process, putting the legislative process in place on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is the democratic process, Mr. Speaker. It is exactly the democratic process that we're proposing be used.

I think the third party, by suggesting that the process in this Legislature to put policy forward is not democratic—is a pretty outrageous statement, Mr. Speaker. I think that the third party doesn't want to talk about the substance. I think that the third party wants to talk about process because they don't want to talk about the substance, because they want to delay. I want to make sure that we have a process in place that allows us to move by January 1, 2017, to have those rules in place. I think the third party wants to delay beyond that. We're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

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

New question.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Education.

The Child Care and Early Years Act provides a new legislative framework to increase access and oversight in Ontario's child care sector. Minister, it is important for our government to give children the best possible start in life.

I was surprised to hear the concerns from my constituents about changes to ratios and regulations that would impact families. Constituents in my riding of York South–Weston are raising concerns about the proposed changes to the child care regulations. Speaker, through you to the minister, could she please tell us, and tell everyone in this House, what our government is doing to address these concerns?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for York South–Weston for the question.

The proposed regulatory changes were posted for public feedback from February 1 to April 1 of this year. During this period we engaged with families and stakeholders, and did receive extensive feedback on the proposed regulations.

I want to assure you and everyone else here this morning, Speaker, that we have heard the concerns raised, and I want to be clear that the regulations as posted will

not be implemented. We will be taking another look at some of the proposed regulations and will be engaging with our sector, the child care sector, on a plan moving forward that makes changes to reflect the concerns that have been voiced. We will continue to consult and revisit where changes need to be made in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for her answer. It is reassuring to hear that the concerns of my constituents in York South–Weston are being taken seriously.

I know how important it is for our government to continue to provide high-quality and safe child care. I'm well aware that our government wants to ensure that we are increasing access to child care for families across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister tell us how else our government will continue to modernize Ontario's child care and early years system, and how we can ensure that the concerns of my constituents and other families in Ontario continue to be heard?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Since 2003, our government has doubled child care funding to more than \$1 billion annually. The number of licensed child care spaces in Ontario has grown to nearly 351,000 spaces, an increase of 87% in the number of licensed spaces. We're also creating 4,000 new child care spaces as a result of a \$120-million capital investment over three years to construct new child care spaces in new schools.

But I do want to be clear: The regulation on the ratios as posted will not be implemented. Changes will be made, and we will ensure that there are options for parents. We have heard the concerns that have been raised and we will work with the sector to find a solution.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. On July 28, 2015, wpd Canada filed a court application about its proposed project to build eight 500-foot-high wind turbines near the Collingwood airport. They wanted the court to force the Ministry of the Environment to make a decision on their project; wpd had gotten tired of waiting, Mr. Speaker.

On September 22, the government filed a notice with the court saying that it intended to fight the application. Two days later, on September 24, the Ontario Liberal Party deposited a donation from wpd in the amount of \$6,000. The court application never went ahead, and the ministry approved the project in February of this year.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us why the Liberal Party was accepting donations from wpd while it was fighting the company in court?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let's just first break this down: The process involved in this involves a director-level decision, which I do not and cannot interfere with. As I said to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, it's our job to protect the integrity of the system.

It then goes to the Environmental Review Tribunal, another—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a fairly clear and transparent process.

Second, we have some of the strongest fundraising rules in Canada, across this country. I've said this before, Mr. Speaker. I know all 107 members of this House reasonably well. I know them to be honourable people who are decent people, who came here to be honest, to work with integrity and to serve their people. To suggest otherwise is just really, really, really low, Mr. Speaker—

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

Some of the comments I heard were not—I wish I could assign them to somebody, because I would.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: That \$6,000 donation is the largest single donation that wpd had ever given to the Liberal Party. In March 2014, the ministry asked wpd for an updated report on their wind turbine application. That same month, wpd donated \$3,000 to the Liberal Party, their second-largest donation. Two months later, in May, wpd submitted that updated report to the ministry, and that same month wpd donated a further \$2,000 to the Liberal Party, their third-largest donation.

Every time it looked like the project was in jeopardy, a donation was made to the Liberal Party of Ontario. These facts only reinforce the need for a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister seriously expect the people in my riding to believe that these donations had absolutely nothing to do with his approval of the wpd project?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. There are some very large temptations to speak while I'm standing and while I've gotten people's attention, and it's going to stop.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The short answer is yes, Mr. Speaker.

The second part of this: Let's go back to the process. The member, who is a former Minister of the Environment knows how bulletproof these processes are. MOECC conducted one of its most comprehensive reviews to ensure that wpd's proposal would meet our stringent requirements. The Ontario Renewable Energy Approval process ensures that extensive consultation takes place with the public, aboriginal groups and local governments. We extended a six-month review over two years and considered 350 public and agency submissions. Finally, again, the point I made earlier: These decisions are made by public officials.

1120

Mr. Speaker, to be very clear about this: I have been in public life municipally and provincially. I've conducted myself to a very high personal standard. I know the member opposite. I know him to be a person of great

character. I know him because he was a minister before, and I hope he—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A general reminder to all members: to the Chair.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Advocates for public health care released a new report this morning called Ontario's Hospitals Cut Beyond All Limits. I think the title says it all. It lays out in painstaking detail the full extent of the Liberal cuts to Ontario hospitals.

The work of the Ontario Health Coalition confirms what patients are seeing across our province. Under this Premier's watch, the crisis of cuts in our hospitals is getting worse: hundreds of nurses and front-line hospital workers laid off; hospital beds closed. Rural communities are forced to fight just to keep the doors open and the lights on in their own local hospitals.

People want to know why this Premier is so determined to keep cutting hospital care.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I'm determined to do is to build up our health care system, to make sure that our health care system serves the people of this province with the right health care, in a timely way, where they need it.

We have to look at the whole health care system and hospitals are a very, very important part of that, which is why there's \$345 million more of new money in this year's budget for the hospital sector. But beyond that, there is \$1 billion more in new money that we're putting into health care, into the whole system.

Again, I know the member of the third party understands that the health care system is under transition. There's no doubt about that. It's changing. The way health care's been delivered is changing. There are community services available now that were not available in the past, and there's more of that which is necessary. So we have to look at the system as a whole.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Premier likes to deny that any hospital cuts are happening under her watch, but the Premier's fooling no one. Patients, families, front-line hospital workers and administrators, as well as local health coalitions, all see right through the Liberals' talking points.

St. Joseph's Health Care in London said they have seen almost \$36.5 million cut over the last four years under this Liberal government. All those cuts mean bed closures, longer wait times for patients and fewer front-line nurses and health care workers.

When services are cut in our hospitals, they get privatized in the community. They are not available. They are not accessible. They have no oversight. It begs the question: Why is this Premier putting hospitals in the

terrible position of making decisions based on dollars and deficits, rather than what's best for patients and their families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, I guess I would say back to the member of the third party, why is she not talking about the whole health care system? Why is she not talking about the way health care delivery is changing? She is a health care provider. I would think she would understand that people who are in the community, who need care, want that care in their homes. They want it through community delivery services as opposed to putting all of that onus on the hospital.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think, given the heckling that's coming from the third party right now, they actually recognize—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Don't get sick. You'll see it for yourself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can hide, but I can still catch you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact that since 2003 there are 5,600 more doctors in the system—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How about seniors and drugs? Another climb down.

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

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

We have paramedics who are in the Legislature today. I think they recognize that there are changes happening in the system that are necessary in order for us to deliver 21st-century health care.

ONTARIO TRAILS

Mr. Han Dong: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Over the past few weeks, we have seen Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, repeatedly criticized by the opposition parties based on misconceptions related to the trail easements. Numerous times, the minister has said that an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, will be a voluntary agreement between a landlord and an eligible body or bodies.

Mr. Don McCabe, the OFA president, has said that Bill 100 does not encroach on the freedom of individual landowners.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he tell this House more about the trail easements?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for the question. Trail easements under Bill 100 are voluntary and will not alter existing land use agreements. It surprises me that many of the members opposite have gone on record saying that this is actually a threat to trails here in the province of Ontario, but yet our stakeholders have repeatedly told this government that Bill 100 is a wonderful bill.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have said that they are

fully supportive of this bill. Bruce Trail has told us that trail easements are a very useful tool that will cut years of bureaucratic red tape.

This is just another example, Mr. Speaker, of the Progressive Conservatives being out of touch with the people of Ontario. I hope the opposition will get outside to support—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's all you're doing is fuelling the flames. It's true.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't waste it.

Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for clarifying this issue.

I cannot stress enough how important Bill 100 is to Ontario. Trail tourism contributes \$1.4 billion to our economy each year. That number includes over \$800 million in labour income, which supports an estimated 18,000 jobs across the province.

Bill 100 is intended to grow the trails sector by connecting and expanding trails across the province, increasing the economic benefits for local communities such as mine in Trinity–Spadina.

There have been questions on whether we did enough consultations on Bill 100. Could the minister tell the members of this House how we consulted on Bill 100?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I want to thank the member for Trinity–Spadina for the question. I know he's a huge supporter of trails here in the province of Ontario. In fact, the Bill Davis trail recently opened up in Trinity–Spadina.

To develop Bill 100, our ministry held broad, in-person consultations right across the entire province. We engaged with groups like the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance, Simcoe County Trails, the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, the Bruce Trail Conservancy, the Ontario Native Women's Association, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We consulted with 80 municipalities, with indigenous groups, with landowners and with trail organizations from all across Ontario. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we consulted with over 250 different groups here in Ontario. I think our government has done an excellent job—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time.

New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Yesterday, Ontario Gaming East announced it would be relocating the slots at Kawartha Downs in my riding to Peterborough and building a new casino. The township of Cavan Monaghan will lose \$3 million in annual slot revenues to fix roads and bridges, which will only continue to strain the small budget of my municipality. This government loves to talk about infrastructure, yet now that my township is faced

with losing significant slot revenues, this government won't bat an eye.

Speaker, will the minister tell my municipality where they are supposed to find the \$3 million that his government has now ripped out of their budget?

1130

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for her question this morning, but let me give the member a little history—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo will come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me give the member a little history.

I remember when I was a city councillor in Peterborough in 1997-98, we had started talks about annexation with that municipality to offer financial support as that process moved forward. While I'm not a member of city council today, I understand, in conversations with the mayor of Peterborough, Daryl Bennett, that there have been ongoing talks with that municipality regarding annexation proposals. Even though I'm not privy to discussions, I'm told that the city of Peterborough has made very generous offers to that municipality for their future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Wow. I don't know what discussions have been going on, but my discussion is that the OLG and the government have repeatedly said that they were committed to the longer-term sustainability of the horse racing industry. Kawartha Downs had 100 races. It now has 18, but the loss of slots is going to ultimately close Kawartha Downs, and horse racing will be gone.

In 2013, that very minister said that he had planned to maintain a share of slot revenues to support the horse racing industry. Yesterday's announcement shows the minister has no plan. Mr. Speaker, were the bright lights and allure of a shiny new casino in his riding just too hard for the minister to resist?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, if the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member should do her homework. She should sit down with municipal representatives of Cavan Monaghan to find out the generous offer that the city of Peterborough put on the table for that municipality to sustain their finances for the future to come.

When it comes to horse racing, the only time that member ever showed up at Kawartha Downs was when they thought they were going to close it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That one actually hurt my ear.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It hurt yours, too? Just saying.

The minister has one sentence.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The fact of the matter is John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson put forward a path for sustainable horse racing in the province of Ontario. It was never supported by—

Interjections.

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

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Today, I'm asking the Premier to do the math. I'm asking her to estimate the minimum monthly income needed for a single person to live a healthy, dignified life in our province.

In her estimation, what is the bare minimum needed to afford basics like nutritious food, safe and decent housing, and clothing; to have access to transportation, a telephone? What does it cost for a single person to live in places like Timmins or Hamilton or Attawapiskat, or right in her own riding of Don Valley West? How much does the Premier imagine this costs?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his interest in social assistance. I really welcome this, and of course, we will be debating his private member's bill tomorrow. I look forward to having 50 minutes in this House to talk about the most vulnerable in our society.

As the member has referenced, rates are extremely important. This is why we have been increasing rates consistently over the last number of years.

In this year's budget, we really did take the unprecedented step of saying that there would no longer be a clawback of child support payments.

We intend to take a very comprehensive look at social assistance reform. In a way—it's the whole of government way of looking at how we can support our most vulnerable people. We will be looking at employment incentives, training—a number of different areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect, unfortunately it's no surprise that the Premier can't give me an estimate. This government simply does not understand the daily challenges faced by people trying to pay the bills in Ontario. It's time to do the math.

During this government's time in office, the poorest people in Ontario have got poorer. Food banks are overflowing. People on social assistance programs—including people with chronic disabilities, unable to participate in the labour market—have less real income today than they had under Mike Harris.

New Democrats believe that governments must make evidence-based public policy. We believe that we need social assistance benefits that actually reflect the real

costs of living. Will the Premier take the politics out of social assistance? Will the Premier commit to ensuring social assistance policy is based in evidence?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It is really refreshing to hear from the new New Democratic Party their interest in these important matters. I seem to recall that the 2014 election platform—you will recall the nine pages—never once mentioned the most vulnerable in our society. We never saw any support for our increasing of the minimum wage. We haven't seen support for the Ontario Child Benefit—in all the aspects that we have taken, all the initiatives that we've taken to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our society.

Again, the way we are going to address this very important issue is that we're going to look across the spectrum of supports for people on social assistance. In fact, in this budget, we also saw free tuition for post-secondary training. This is going to help the most vulnerable in our society. We're going to look at health benefits; we're going to look at housing. We have some very important initiatives that this government has introduced, and we will continue in this way.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order.

New question.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Education. In looking around this place today, we all recognize the International Day of Pink, a day where we recognize the anti-bullying initiative that began in Nova Scotia after a grade 9 student was bullied in his school for wearing pink. Two students who witnessed the incident bought pink shirts to stand united with the student against bullying.

Now, many schools run events on the Day of Pink, including in my riding of Cambridge and Waterloo region. When my son Liam was co-president of Southwood Secondary School, he and his friends had their fingernails painted pink, as well as their faces, as a challenge, and he organized events, including a play about the effects of bullying, for the students.

It's important that we continue to stand together and create awareness, not only today but every day. Can the minister tell this House how we ensure that our students feel safe and respected at schools across our province?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Well, thank you to the member. I'm just going to have to go to Southwood and check out all these pink faces and fingernails. It sounds like fun.

Our schools must be places where everyone—staff, students, parents and the community—feel welcome, safe and respected. That's why I'm proud of the Accepting Schools Act. This act is Canada's most comprehensive

anti-bullying legislation, and as part of its definition of bullying, it also includes cyberbullying.

School safety has been a priority for this government from the beginning, and that's why we require all school boards to have policies on bullying prevention and intervention. Our government has invested \$425 million in safe schools initiatives that are helping make Ontario's schools safer. In fact, this year—

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I thank the minister for her commitment on this important issue. We're extremely proud of the investments made towards educating not only our students, but parents and staff. For the first time ever, we have defined bullying in legislation so that every student, teacher, principal and parent knows what we're talking about when we say that bullying is not okay in our schools.

Minister, in 2015, you introduced the revised health and physical education curriculum to better reflect the advancement of technology in making information readily available to students. I've had many of my constituents in Cambridge speak positively about this new curriculum, noting that the previous curriculum was written well before the use of cellphones and the Internet was prevalent around students. In fact, my oldest two children didn't have cellphones until they reached university.

Speaker, through you, can the minister tell us about the benefits of the revised curriculum and how it's helping our students navigate in today's technology-driven world?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The reality is that we want our children to be safe and healthy, but we also want to ensure that they have access to accurate information. We needed to update our health and phys-ed curriculum so that students understand the importance of healthy relationships, having the confidence to say no, safe use of technology and the Internet, and mental health.

The revised curriculum offers increased support, acceptance and visibility for LGBTQ and two-spirit children and youth.

We're also working to ensure that our students have the opportunity to learn more about online safety through the revised curriculum. Students are learning about safe and respectful use of technology, the social, emotional and legal implications of online behaviour such as—

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

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: 10 months ago, all parties in this House supported a private member's bill, the Provincial Framework and Action Plan concerning Emerging Vector-Borne Diseases Act. I thank everyone for that support. Part of the legislation was a requirement to develop a provincial framework and to develop the action plan within a year.

Lyme tick season is now upon us. Will the Premier now please report to the House, and to the victims of this awful affliction, the progress to date, what's being done?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I will say I don't have the information on what has happened so far. I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to him when he returns. He is, as you know, in Attawapiskat today with the Minister of Children and Youth Services and will certainly get back to the member opposite with an update.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain on a point of order.

Miss Monique Taylor: I missed introductions earlier, and I see a dear friend up in the top. I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today, with OPSEU, Lorraine Stitch.

DEFERRED VOTES

JOB'S FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT LA CRÉATION D'EMPLOIS POUR AUJOURD'HUI ET DEMAIN (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes / Projet de loi 173, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Horwath, Andrea	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Jones, Sylvia	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLaren, Jack	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 44.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to welcome again the representatives of the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario here today. They will be around this afternoon with meetings with everyone, and I hope they take the opportunity and have a good discussion with them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEMOPHILIA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to stand today in the Legislature before World Hemophilia Day, which will be celebrated on April 17 this year.

Hemophilia is a genetic bleeding disorder which impairs the body's ability to properly clot. Unfortunately, one in 1,000 people have a bleeding disorder like hemophilia, but many go undiagnosed and never receive the treatment they require.

It's estimated that 75% of those suffering from hemophilia around the world are still receiving inadequate access or no access at all to proper treatment. There is no cure for hemophilia, although it can be controlled through regular treatments, such as infusions of the deficient clotting factor, which is a lifelong process and highly costly.

The World Federation of Hemophilia is a not-for-profit organization and has been a tireless advocate for over 50 years for bleeding disorders. The training and education they provide to people regarding proper diagnosis and management for those who suffer from hemophilia is crucial in the fight against this delicate disease.

I just want to take a moment and recognize John Plater. John Plater was a friend of mine in university. I used to go to the movies with him Tuesday nights. He passed away four years ago. He had hemophilia and was affected by the tainted blood scandal this country went through, but he played a key role in ensuring that those were looked after. He was a strong fighter for human rights, and I don't think we could celebrate World Hemophilia Day without mentioning heroes like John Plater in this Legislature.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: I was joined in the media studio this morning by anti-poverty advocates from Hamilton and Toronto. They discussed the gross inadequacy of social assistance rates in Ontario, the effects of this deep poverty trap on children, families and single people, and the path forward proposed in my Bill 185 that would tie social assistance rates to the actual cost of living in different Ontario municipalities.

Ontario's desperately low social assistance rates have left families hungry, underhoused and sick. It's heart-breaking to hear the real effects of our inadequate safety net on the lives of real Ontarians. Over 900,000 people in the province rely on Ontario Works or ODSP, but more than half of these families do not even have enough to eat.

The continuing existence of deep poverty in this province is a scandal. We see dire poverty and all its terrible effects in many First Nations and remote northern communities, as we're going through right now. We see it in our greatest cities, and we see it throughout rural Ontario.

Social policy-making should be based on evidence and research. My Bill 185 will provide the government and the public with hard evidence and research on the cost of living in different Ontario communities each year and recommend benefit rates that meet people's basic needs. The bill is a real change, a step forward in ending dire poverty in Ontario. I hope that all members will support it.

Speaker, I must say I was a little disappointed this morning to hear some of the comments from the minister in reference to the activity of the NDP in these matters. I can remember the days of grandmothers when that party cut off grandmothers from support.

VAISAKHI

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: April 13 is a day of great significance for Sikhs as on this occasion Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th guru of the Sikhs, laid down the foundation of Khalsa, the Order of the Pure Ones.

On this day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh summoned Sikhs from all over India to the city of Anandpur Sahib. At this gathering, the guru called upon Sikhs to uphold their faith and preserve the Sikh religion. In this ceremony, Guru Gobind Singh made five Sikhs the Panj Pyare, or the Five Beloved Ones.

It was following this ceremony that Guru Gobind Singh created the order of the Khalsa, or soldier saints. In a move to end social subdivisions, Guru Gobind Singh asked the Panj Pyare to drop their surnames that linked them to caste or occupation, and gave them new names. The women were called Kaur, meaning "princess," to emphasize dignity, and men were called Singh, which means "lion," a reminder of the need for courage.

The Guru created five articles of faith which all Khalsa were required to wear, all beginning with the letter K. Each of these articles of faith is rooted in Sikh philosophy.

The turban is also a central tenet of Sikh faith. The turban represents the Sikh's commitment to service to others and to uphold equal rights for all, with accountability only to God.

Vaisakhi is also a Punjabi harvest festival. This day is also observed as a thanksgiving day by farmers to pay tribute, thanking God for the abundant harvest and also praying for future prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, over 600,000 Sikhs live in Canada. The festival of Vaisakhi has a tremendous religious significance for over 350,000 Sikhs who reside in Ontario. Every year, Ontario Sikhs take great pride in decorating gurdwaras and organizing Nagar Kirtans. This year, the Nagar Kirtan will be held in Toronto on April 24 and in Mississauga on May 1. I want to extend an invitation to all my colleagues to attend these functions.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Communities in my riding are expressing concern about volatility and sudden price changes in gasoline experienced at times in northern Ontario. The city of North Bay and the municipality of Powassan both recently passed resolutions regarding this concern. They note that five provinces—PEI, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Quebec—now utilize a form of gas price regulation, with a system that sets a maximum price and a scheduled change where customers know what they're paying week to week, with province-wide price ranges in place.

The city of North Bay also points out that drivers in northern Ontario often see wide ranges in gasoline prices compared to other areas, particularly in southern Ontario. As a result, North Bay and Powassan councils both resolved to "request the provincial government to investigate benefits of such regulation for Ontario."

Speaker, the fact that these resolutions come at a time that gas prices are much lower than they have been in the recent past I believe reinforces the level of concern being expressed here, and the government should take that concern seriously.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to congratulate Ahmad Moussaoui and the Canadian Federation of Students on their change.org petition, which has generated signatures from 60,000 Ontario students in less than one month.

The campaign was organized in response to the changes to student aid announced in this year's budget, which will reduce tuition fees for many low-income students beginning in 2017 but will do nothing to address the crushing debt burden carried by current students and recent graduates.

For more than a decade, Ontario students have been paying higher tuition fees than in any other province. With students forced to rely on loans to finance their education, many are graduating with debt loads of \$27,000 or more.

At the same time, interest on student loans charged by the Ontario government means that many graduates pay as much in interest as to pay down their principal—in a labour market that offers little or no job security, or offers unpaid internships that earn nothing at all. The prospect of years of debt prevents these graduates from even thinking about the normal milestones of adult life, like buying a house or a car, getting married or starting a family.

Speaker, interest on student loans is effectively a poor tax. It disadvantages those from the lowest-income families, who carry the largest loans. I urge this government to listen to the 60,000 students who have signed the petition and provide debt relief and eliminate interest repayment from student loans.

EAST YORK SKATING CLUB

Mr. Arthur Potts: Today it is my pleasure to rise in the House and congratulate East York Skating Club on the 65th anniversary of their ice show. The theme of this year's program is Musical Tribute: Decades of Music, celebrating music from the 1950s to today.

Since 1949, the East York Skating Club has been an important part of the Beaches–East York community. Thousands of skaters have trained and started their careers here, including many who have gone on to compete at national and international levels. Kimberly Aherne, who is my legislative assistant, is but one of their many talented athletes, and she can still execute a double Salchow.

1510

A big part of the Ice Show's success and popularity is that it allows all skaters who regularly participate in the club's year-round programming to perform. The East York Skating Club is a not-for-profit and is renowned for its community involvement. A large group of coaches, parents and volunteers spend countless hours ensuring that the performance numbers are polished, the costumes are resplendent and that every small detail is managed.

The show is a true community effort. It's the highlight of the season, not just for the skaters but for the families

and friends who support them and the hundreds of skating fans who come out to see the show.

The 65th annual Ice Show takes place next weekend at the East York Memorial Arena, with three shows scheduled for Friday and Saturday. I personally will be attending opening night, and my family and I are looking forward to celebrating these skaters and their performances and to thanking all the coaches and volunteers who make this event so very, very special.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can still do one too.

The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

BOOST CHILD AND YOUTH
ADVOCACY CENTRE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to highlight the work taking place at Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre in Toronto. The child and youth advocacy centre is a partnership between eight local community and government agencies, including the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Catholic Children's Aid Society, Native Child and Family Services, Jewish Family and Child Service, Toronto Police Service, Radius Child and Youth Services, the Child Development Institute and the Hospital for Sick Children.

This effort brings together all professionals involved in child abuse cases under one roof for a coordinated, seamless, multidisciplinary approach to protecting children across Toronto.

Boost became the first ever child and youth advocacy centre in all of Toronto in 2013. Since then, they have become the largest centre of its kind in all of Canada.

In 2014-15, Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre conducted 800 investigations and served 325 children and youth as well as 259 parents and caregivers. This is a model that works and has proven to help our province's children and youth.

I urge this government to allow other communities across the province to replicate this successful model. I want to thank Boost for the great work they are doing in helping the lives of our province's children and youth.

WORLD LEBANESE CULTURAL UNION

Mr. John Fraser: Last Saturday I had the pleasure of joining Premier Kathleen Wynne and my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, Amrit Mangat, at the World Lebanese Cultural Union World Congress Gala.

In my riding of Ottawa South, I'm fortunate to represent many families of Lebanese descent, and on Saturday night I was pleased to see so many familiar faces from Ottawa at the gala.

The World Lebanese Cultural Union is a non-political, non-religious organization dedicated to building cultural and economic bridges between Lebanon and the many countries that millions of Lebanese people now call home.

The gala brought together people from across the country to honour three members of their community for their contribution to Canadian society and the Lebanese community: The first was entrepreneur and Honorary Consul of Lebanon Mr. Wadih Fares from Halifax, president of W.M. Fares Group; entrepreneur Mr. Jamil Cheaib from Quebec, president of Marché Adonis; and lastly, entrepreneur Mr. Mohamad Fakih, president of Paramount Fine Foods right here in Ontario.

It was an honour to be there.

2016 EQUITY CONFERENCE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On April 2, I attended the 2016 Equity Conference, hosted by the Dufferin–Peel Catholic school board at St. Francis Xavier high school in my great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South.

Sometimes we forget that for all the diversity in Peel region, there are some very simple inequalities which our society must challenge, such as gender inequality or the stigma that surrounds mental health, which affects us all.

The keynote speaker at the conference was Margaret Trudeau, who herself experienced society's harsh, even unjust, attitude towards mental illness.

I want to thank the school board for hosting this wonderful conference and for raising the issue of equity in race, socio-economics and personal ability, as well as mental health. Mr. Speaker, it was inspiring to see so many teachers and staff attend this important event.

And of course I want to thank Michelle Coutinho, the principal of equity, diversity and inclusive education with the board, for organizing the event. Congratulations, Michelle, on your highly successful event.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee recommends that Bill Pr38, An Act respecting the Corporation of the Municipality of Huron Shores and the Thessalon First Nation, be not reported.

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr39, An Act respecting The Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall;

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive 828117 Ontario Limited;

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Bud Monahan Guitar Sales & Service Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I am pleased to sign my name to this petition and give it to page Aarbhi.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Hydro One Not for Sale!” It reads:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

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

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

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

“Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

“Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special

education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

“Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

“Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

“Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

“To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential.”

I agree with this and will sign it and send it to the table with page Madeline.

1520

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege to bring this petition to the Legislature on behalf of probation and parole officers across Ontario.

“Supporting the Inclusion of Probation and Probation and Parole Officers in Presumptive PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) Legislation under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 163 provides for WSIB benefits for a select few first responders diagnosed with PTSD; and

“Whereas MCSCS probation and parole officers and MCYS probation officers have been specifically excluded from Bill 163, despite overwhelming evidence that these front-line officers are exposed to primary trauma, secondary trauma and vicarious trauma often resulting in PTSD diagnoses; and

“Whereas the rates of assaults, threats and intimidation of corrections staff have increased by 2,750% in the period from 2009 to 2014; and

“Whereas Manitoba’s Bill 35 ‘Workers Compensation Amendment Act’ includes probation and probation and parole officers; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has neither programs for the prevention of PTSD nor employee assistance programs (EAP) nor wellness programs that specifically support and treat those workers diagnosed with PTSD or like symptoms;

“We, the undersigned probation officers and probation and parole officers, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall include probation officers and probation and parole officers in presumptive PTSD legislation under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services creates

programs aimed at PTSD prevention, along with employee assistance programs and wellness programs that address the mental health needs and occupational stressors related to trauma exposure.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition, sign my name to it and send it with page Christina.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

“Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

“Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

“Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

“Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

“To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential.”

I’m happy to fix my name and give it to page Vanessa.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled “Don’t Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and” IBI “are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

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

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

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

“Whereas personal support workers are the largest group of unregulated health care workers in Canada; and

“Whereas PSWs take care of society’s most vulnerable citizens including seniors in long-term care, home care, hospitals and retirement homes, and adults with disabilities in supportive housing; and

“Whereas there is an increasing demand for PSWs and they are a key component of a sustainable health care system; and

“Whereas PSWs do not have a set scope of practice, standards of practice or curriculum; and

“Whereas PSWs are left to perform one of the most important jobs in health care without the proper tools;

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

“To designate personal support workers as a regulated health profession and enact according legislation.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to Sabrina.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have thousands of names on this petition that was brought to me by Dr. Albert Ng. He is from the board of directors of OMA District 1. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together

through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many parents and caregivers are being charged non-refundable fees to place their children on wait-lists for daycare centres;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees can range from tens to hundreds of dollars;

“Whereas due to the scarcity of quality daycare spaces, many parents and caregivers are forced to place their children on multiple wait-lists;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees impose a significant financial burden on parents and caregivers for the mere opportunity to access quality child care;

“Whereas daycare wait-lists are often administered in a non-transparent manner which creates the risk that they will be administered in an unfair and/or discriminatory manner;

“Whereas parents and caregivers in Ontario already face significant barriers accessing daycare due to high costs and limited numbers of daycare spaces;

“Whereas quality child care is a public good and not a commodity and the costs of child care should not operate on a supply-and-demand basis....”

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that we have a responsibility to take action now, and support a requirement for transparent administration of daycare wait-lists and a ban on non-refundable daycare wait-list fees.”

I agree with this petition. I’m going to affix my signature on it and hand it to Aarshi.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has implemented a number of health care services cuts that impact patient care; and

“Whereas as a direct result of ministry cuts, the laboratory at the Highlands Health Network is closed as of January 1, 2016, this will drastically reduce services, affecting many patients who rely on the in-house laboratory for essential tests; and

“Whereas patient care is affected by the government’s cuts including: \$54 million of the federal Canada Health Transfer from Ontario’s health care budget, \$815 million from physician services, \$50 million from physiotherapy

services for seniors and 50 medical residency positions across the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Health as follows:

“Restore funding to the physicians, so that the Highlands Health Network can continue providing laboratory services for all its patients.”

I support the petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Diluk to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, and I want to thank Mr. Vince Wright from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice....

“Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there’s no return; and

“Whereas we’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I fully support this petition and will ask Maya to bring it to the Clerk.

1530

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

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

“Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs; and

“Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

“Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

“Whereas the freezing of student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind;

“Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

“To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential.”

I agree with this and pass it off to page Joshua.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is shuffling.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, just bear with me for a moment. I wasn’t ready for your call here.

I want to tell the great folks in Peterborough riding that we will be doing government order G181. I know that this will be a very popular debate today.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 12, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time this was debated, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton had the floor. I don’t see him, so: further debate?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I’m very pleased to rise today to begin the debate this afternoon on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. I’m going to be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa–Orléans and the member for Newmarket–Aurora, ending with the member for Halton.

I am looking forward to having this opportunity to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and the House how exactly

this bill is being viewed in my community of Kitchener Centre. I've reached out to my local municipal leaders for their feedback because they're the ones that are going to have to work with the proposals that we're bringing forward.

The overarching goal, of course, is to ensure that our democratic process is fair and efficient concerning local elections, all the while keeping up with modern perspectives. I would say that Bill 181 does exactly that.

The proposed changes will provide clear rules that will govern how municipal leaders are elected while reflecting how to run a modern campaign and election. With each municipal election, the ministry does review the Municipal Elections Act. This is how we ensure that the needs of Ontario communities are being met during the election process. These reviews are done with extensive consultations. I can tell you that we received over 3,400 submissions, and they came in from the public, from municipal councils and from their staff. So we are listening to the needs of Ontario communities.

In my riding of Kitchener Centre, the impact of these consultations is very evident. I contacted and heard from my mayor, Berry Vrbanovic. He is very happy that our government listened to municipalities, and he's especially happy to see the shortened election period—we're going to be moving from January 1 to May 1.

Many of us who ran in the provincial election that ran for five to six weeks in 2014 would agree that it can be mentally and physically exhausting. Imagine what our local politicians who run for six months must go through. At my level in Kitchener, they're very happy to see the shortened period. Ken Seiling, the Chair of Waterloo region, told me that he also believes the shortened election period is a great idea, and he fully supports this proposal.

This is a very positive process of this government. We listened and we consulted, as we've always done. These consultations led to many other elements in this bill that I believe are important to talk about in some detail. Another issue mentioned by Kitchener mayor Vrbanovic is that the low voter turnout at local elections has him concerned. This was echoed throughout the consultation process, and looking at ways to try to reverse this trend is important. We are providing municipalities with the option of introducing ranked ballot voting in their communities. By giving councils this option, they can facilitate public input and open meetings. This method is favoured by our regional Chair, Ken Seiling. It's going to allow municipalities to determine the best possible course of action for their own communities. We know that many jurisdictions have already adopted ranked ballots, and they have seen better engagement, better debates and a higher voter turnout. This directly addresses the issue brought before us through consultation.

We're also proposing changes to campaign financing, ensuring that the rules are clear, simple to follow and easier to enforce. This increases transparency and accountability at the local level. To ensure better transparency, the bill proposes to regulate third-party ad-

vertisers for greater accountability. This includes setting contribution and spending limits. Any discussion regarding modern elections must also include a discussion of whether to ban corporate and union donations. These changes do provide municipalities with a choice—again, we're giving them a choice—to allow this to occur or not occur. It is up to them to make the best decisions for their communities.

Clerks are also going to be required to make public a report of which candidates filed financial statements and which ones did not. This again serves to increase accountability.

As of right now, Ontario has the longest-running nomination period of any province. This is shown to contribute to campaign fatigue among candidates and voters—I mentioned earlier that the length of the campaign is perhaps the reason why people are disengaged. By shortening the period that candidates can run for election, we're also listening to the feedback we're getting from municipalities and cutting down on campaign fatigue.

We're also seeking to help make elections more accessible by requiring accessibility plans prepared before the election and made public before voting day. This is going to help people who want to get to polling stations but may have some difficulty because of physical disabilities.

Finally, we're proposing improvements to the voters list, making it easier for voters to add and edit their information.

Bill 181 improves our municipal electoral process. This is supported by municipalities, because we listened to their needs. I heard some members of the opposition objecting to this. I want you to know that I contacted my local municipal leaders, and they support this bill; they're behind it.

I hope that all my fellow members here are going to join me and help to bring the Municipal Elections Act into the modern age with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Like the other members in this House, it's a pleasure to rise and bring my voice to this debate today.

All of us in this House agree that democracy best serves the people when we engage Ontarians, give individuals a greater voice in choosing their municipal politicians and, importantly, reduce barriers, whether physical or not. We've heard many things about what this bill will contribute. But as someone who is passionate about disability and the progress we've made through the AODA, I'm extremely pleased to see that we will be looking at reducing barriers for those with disabilities.

When I was engaging many communities last year, on the 10th anniversary of the AODA, I heard of the good work we've done but the journey we must continue. This is why I'm extremely pleased that this act specifies that city clerks would prepare accessibility plans to identify and remove barriers that could affect both voters and

candidates with disabilities. This plan would also be available to the public before the election. So I am extremely glad that we are continuing to look at how to engage those with disabilities and make it easier for them to exercise their right.

1540

Speaker, as a member who had one of the highest voter turnouts in the last election, I am hopeful that the tools this bill gives to municipalities will encourage voter turnout at the municipal level. This voter turnout is affected by many factors, and this bill, if passed, will give the tools to municipalities to encourage and support voters and candidates.

As part of the consultation following the 2014 municipal election, PA Rinaldi came to Ottawa, and I had the pleasure of sitting in on this meeting. I heard from candidates, both successful and not successful, on the unnecessarily long length of the writ period. This was one of their major concerns, and I am happy to say we've heard this concern and are taking action. Entering a potentially 10-month-long contest is a daunting task and potentially could sway many people to not enter the race at all.

Also, from a female politician, I feel this long writ period is an impediment for females seeking a seat on council or running for mayor. I do hope that this bill will lead to more women entering the political area because while we have strong female mayors, many of whom I had the pleasure of meeting at AMO and OGRA/ROMA each year, the councillors themselves are heavily male. In fact, I have to say that of the 23 city of Ottawa councillors, there are only four women.

This act, if passed, will help our municipalities also conduct efficient elections. I have to say—and I'm going to give a plug to my councillors—I work with three great councillors: Bob Monette, Jody Mitic and Stephen Blais. While we don't always agree on who provides the most services to citizens, I do agree that they do fantastic work. This bill will help my councillors continue to do their great work. I hope that they're watching right now, and I'll say, "You're welcome, guys."

We are allowing municipalities, if they so choose, to introduce the ranked ballot system. We are allowing our municipalities to decide how to conduct their electoral business, and we're giving them a new tool to ensure that they can better engage their citizens.

In any democracy, the success of elections depends on voters and candidate engagement, so we hope that these increase through the actions we are taking and by the tools we are allowing municipalities to use, if they so choose.

I just want to finish by stating that these changes here are needed to help strengthen our democracy. If one more voter votes, or a candidate—and I have to give my plug—especially a female candidate, runs, then this bill has served a tremendous purpose for the continuation of our strong democratic system.

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

Boy, the government is asleep at the switch today.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I am delighted to stand and talk about Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. It holds near to my heart a number of the key things that, as a municipal councillor, I saw up close and personal in my days around council table, and for many years before that, in my involvement with municipal politics across Ontario.

I just wanted to reiterate from the beginning that the government is proposing to change the Municipal Elections Act in an aim to ensure that the rules of governing how municipal leaders are elected are clear and reflect how to run modern campaigns and elections. The ministry reviews the Municipal Elections Act following each municipal election to ensure that the act meets the changing needs of Ontario's communities. We've heard for many years, especially in my neck of the woods, that that time had come.

Relevant to that is the fact that the government received some 3,400 submissions on how the act can be improved, by the public and by municipal councils and staff from across the province, as part of the consultations that dated back to 2015.

It goes without saying that municipalities provide important front-line services. They're the level of government that is closest to people. I can attest to that, being a town councillor. I got the phone calls about potholes. I got the phone calls about sports facilities. I also got phone calls about wild turkeys, but that's a whole other issue; I was glad to come here and deal with MNR. I have nothing to do with wild turkeys as a town councillor. We get all the calls because so many people really don't see the difference between the levels of government.

It's vital to make sure that people have faith in their municipal governments. They account for a significant amount of our tax dollars, and people need to be assured that they're transparent and accountable. Allowing more choice in municipal elections is part of the government's plan to build Ontario up.

I'll say that I've had the pleasure of being able to talk to municipal councillors from both of the communities that I represent here at Queen's Park: Newmarket and Aurora. They're similar communities, but still different and apart.

For example, in Aurora, we don't have a ward system; we have first-past-the-post. We have a very vibrant democracy that takes place there every election year. I think, in our previous election, we had 28 people running for eight spots, which made for some very interesting all-candidates debates. I think there were three or four or five people running for mayor. You had to book the better part of an afternoon and an evening, if you were going to an all-candidates debate, by the time people stood up. But I thought it was the hallmark of a good democracy when you got that number of people interested in what's going on.

In Newmarket, we have a ward system, so it's a little different. I think in Newmarket, they're not quite sure whether or not a ranked ballot is the way they want to go,

but certainly they're having a good look at it and there's some good discussion going on. And the same with Aurora; I think they're leaning towards the ranked ballot system.

This bill really has provided the impetus for that type of discussion that is so important.

Just for a quick review, ranked ballots—at a time when voter turnout is going down in many communities—and I can say that that's ours as well—it's really time to look at ideas that can reverse that trend. I think that Bill 181 is the right step in the right direction at the right time.

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise in the House today and speak to Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

I also want to thank my colleagues who spoke to this bill before me—the member from Kitchener Centre, the member from Ottawa, and the member from Newmarket–Aurora—for their comments.

This legislation will change the way Ontarians participate in the municipal elections process. These proposed changes will improve our electoral process and ensure that Ontarians' voices are heard when it comes to grassroots municipal issues. This bill, proposed by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, would make a series of important amendments that will change municipal campaigns for the better.

Our government received over 3,400 submissions from the public, municipal councils and staff about how the Municipal Elections Act could be improved, and we listened. This input was very important and has helped guide the changes that were laid out in Bill 181. People told us that they want these proposed changes. They want an increase in transparency and accountability, efficient elections and more choice to municipalities.

Bill 181 will allow for municipalities to introduce ranked ballot voting in their communities if they choose to do so. Those who are in favour of ranked ballots believe they will make campaigns more civil and can encourage public engagement, better debate and higher voter turnout. Those are important things. Ranked ballots will allow more Ontarians to be heard. At a time when voter turnout has decreased in many Ontario communities, it is important that we give municipalities this option. Our government must continue to look at new, innovative options to ensure that our electoral system, at all levels, is relevant to the public.

1550

Our world is changing and growing. Our rules must change and evolve as our communities do. So I applaud this amendment in Bill 181. I believe that leaving room for electoral change at the municipal level is a step in the right direction for all communities in Ontario.

In addition, the changes to the campaign finance rules that are proposed in this bill will ensure that they are clear, simple to follow and easier to enforce. These new

regulations will ultimately increase transparency and accountability in municipal elections.

By proposing a framework to regulate third-party advertising, this bill would increase accountability for advertisers and ensure more fair and transparent support for candidates. I used to work in the media and I can't stress enough just how important it is that the regulations on advertising be looked at closely during campaigns. Setting contribution and spending limits, as well as ensuring that third parties identify themselves on signs and advertisements, will make for a more reliable and clear electoral system. Voters need to know who is behind media campaigns and what their interests are.

These changes will benefit not only municipalities and Ontarians now but create a fairer system for future generations to come, and for our children. This is about making it easier and clearer for voters to cast their ballot and make choices for their municipalities, while making this process more transparent.

These amendments will also ensure that elections are more accessible for everyone. All Ontarians entitled to a vote must be able to cast their vote. This is a pillar of our democracy. Bill 181 proposes changes that would require clerks to prepare accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers that could affect voters and candidates with disabilities. We all know that a better Ontario is a more accessible Ontario, so I'm very pleased that this bill will ensure that this is a priority for municipalities.

The proposed amendments to the voters list will also ensure that it's easier for voters to add their names to the list, or if they need to make changes to their personal information. Things in life change: where we live, our contact information and even our names sometimes. The ability to more easily change this type of data will definitely be beneficial to all municipalities in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the changes in Bill 181 are necessary to modernize the system and will bring the Municipal Elections Act up to date with our changing province. I hope that all members of this House will see the many benefits of this bill, because it's a piece of legislation that will make a difference and ensure democracy.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It always astonishes me that there are no members on the opposite side who actually read any bills; they just take talking points. There are a couple of points in this bill that I'd like to bring to their attention, and maybe they'll address them in their comments, if they have read the bill.

First off, this bill allows for ranked ballots, but it doesn't specify what sort or what conditions of ranked ballots. Will it be the system where all boxes have to be ticked or the ballot would be spoiled, or will it be the ranked ballots that allow for only one individual to be chosen? I haven't heard that. It's not specified in the bill.

This bill also permits councils to have different balloting systems for different positions within the same election. The mayor's position could be first-past-the-

post; a ward councillor may be a ranked ballot. They could have multiple variations of a ranked ballot within different wards. Certainly, you can see that this would be unacceptable, at best—intolerable, really.

But, it also permits and allows a council to devise its own electoral system in advance of the election. A council could say, “I think we would be better off with a ranked ballot, or maybe we’d be better off with a first-past-the-post ballot, or some combination and variation of.” Elections are too important to allow the council of the day to make choices and variations of the election system.

I’d like to have a response from the members who have read the bill.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m pleased to provide a couple of minutes of commentary on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

Certainly, my community, the municipality of London, is one of those municipalities in the province that is supportive of the ranked ballot. They passed a resolution in June to advise the province that they support municipalities having an option to use ranked balloting in the 2018 municipal election. There was a grassroots initiative that emerged prior to the last municipal election called 123London that has been working on this issue for years, actually, at this point. So this bill was greeted with some enthusiasm by people in my community and by progressives everywhere in the province who do see some of the benefits of ranked balloting.

However, the ranked ballot provisions are packaged in Bill 181 with a number of other initiatives that do raise concerns. In particular, we are very concerned about the third-party advertising provisions. The bill links the right to promote an issue to the right to make a campaign contribution. So if a municipality decides to ban corporate and union contributions, corporations, unions and civil society organizations within a community no longer have a right to freedom of expression; they have no right to raise concerns on issues during a campaign period. We are concerned that this bill could, in fact, stifle democracy rather than enhance democracy.

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

Hon. Reza Moridi: It’s a great pleasure to rise in this House and talk about Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

Our government has listened to the public, and we have received over 3,400 letters and submissions from the members of the public basically requesting the government to modernize this act. That’s what we have been doing, and that’s what this debate is all about.

As we all know, municipalities are the front-line service providers to our towns, to our cities and to our communities, and the politicians who basically oversee these services in our communities need to be elected thoroughly. We need to excite the public to come out and participate in voting and in the democratic process. History

shows us that only about 25% or 30% of the members of the public come out and vote. So we need to encourage them to come out and vote in municipal elections. This is very essential to a healthy democracy, which we need to have in our municipalities, in our cities, towns and regions.

That’s why this bill introduces the ranked ballot process, which is very helpful. In some jurisdictions where they have this process, the results are much, much better than in the ones which do not have that process. Of course, it’s not an easy process; this is quite understandable. It has its own complications, but the end results will lead to a better democracy and better participation of the public in this democratic process.

Also, the bill asks for modernization of campaign finances. That’s also very important. We believe that, particularly in municipalities, the funding or donations by unions should be banned and donations by corporations should be banned. Basically, the people of that municipality have to participate in the financing of campaigns of those candidates who want to run.

1600

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: You know what? Whenever I mention municipal elections and modernizing, which is what this act is about, people talk to me about electronic voting, and nobody has really addressed that yet. I think that some cities, such as the city of Markham—part of my riding is in the city of Markham—have electronic voting, whereas the city of Vaughan doesn’t. That’s very unfortunate. A lot of people in the city of Vaughan don’t make it home on time to vote and don’t realize they can vote in advance or other ways.

In terms of ranked ballots, there’s been a lot of discussion of ranked ballots. As my colleague mentioned, there are a lot of different systems which aren’t being addressed here. As somebody who went through a recount, it concerns me a tiny bit how we would be able to manage recounts in a ranked ballot system. Obviously there is a lot of campaign fatigue. People want shorter campaigns, and there’s a lot of support for that.

I would just mention that in the riding of Thornhill, we used to have an MP and an MPP whose first names were both Peter, and a lot of times voters would get very confused about that and we would just say, “Of course, just vote for whichever Peter you want as long as their name is Peter.”

We aren’t really addressing the fact of the York region chair. I’m really disappointed about that because voters in York region want the chair position to be an elected position for the most part, and that bill is being stalled by the government. It’s a government bill, so I don’t really understand that. The member is here; maybe he can address that later when he has a couple of minutes. It is all about democracy. I think that electing the chair of York region would make York region more democratic.

Copies of voters lists make people very nervous when they hear that there are multiple circulations of voters

lists. Maybe that again could be modernized by having it only accessible online; then people are blocked off and they cannot possibly download it. Maybe that technology is getting there.

Thank you for allowing me to share my comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the four speakers has two minutes.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate the comments from the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, London West, Richmond Hill and Thornhill—good speakers all.

I'm not going to rehash the debate we seem to continuously have about how modern legislators work vis-à-vis legislation versus regulation. So many of the details, I believe, will be worked out in regulation, as they are in other democracies around the world, so I'm not going to go there.

I will comment on the member from Thornhill and the private member's bill, because it's not a government bill. It was a private member's bill that spoke to the election of the chair of York region. From my perspective, that bill is still very active and slowly wending its way along. I agree and thank the member for her continued support.

I just wanted to touch on the issue, again, of ranked ballots, how important it is to engage the community and how this has been a phenomenal opportunity, with 3,400 submissions received from across Ontario—in my community of Newmarket–Aurora—and to have people talk about this and engage people in a positive way. People have been talking about the lack of enthusiasm in municipal politics for a number of years. When I was a town councillor, I would tell them to tune in to cable TV and watch our shows because they were anything but boring, as you can well imagine. It was amazing how many times we got people involved that way.

I also said—given there might be 28 people on a first-past-the-post ballot in Aurora—when asked, if your last name was Aardvark, you would win. That would certainly help.

But this is a great bill. I look forward to further discussion in our community.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and to add to the debate on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

One of the key components of Bill 181 deals with the notion of ranked balloting. Specifically, the bill would give municipalities the right to implement a ranked ballot system without any consultation with the public, beginning with the 2018 election. I'm sure there are some viewers at home wondering, "What is a ranked ballot system and what does it actually mean?" Well, for those of you who actually thought of that question, thank you for asking that question because I'll tell you, from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's website page on the matter, it says, "Ranked ballots allow a voter to rank candidates in order of preference—first choice,

second choice, third choice etc.—instead of just voting for one candidate."

The site goes on to clarify that the changes found within the bill would not impact how school board trustees are elected. It goes on to state, "Please note that ranked ballots are not being considered for school boards. If a municipality decided to use ranked ballots to elect council positions, voters would still use the current voting method to vote for school board trustee."

Barry Kay, a political science professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, said, "Parties that are seen to be more towards the centre, the Liberal Party in our federal system, probably would do somewhat better" under a ranked ballot system. Interesting. This may explain why this specific electoral system is the preferred method of choice for the Liberals compared to the number of potential options for electoral reform that are out there.

Which party would benefit the most from moving from first-past-the-post to ranked ballots? What about various models, about proportional representation or other electoral systems? That's why I believe that no individual party or person in power, be they Liberal or PC or NDP, should be able to make unilateral changes to the system under which they will be getting elected.

Speaker, I'd like to rewind the clock and go back in time. This was the year that Ontario faced a referendum question on electoral reform. That was back in 2007. What they did was, they were asking if the province should abandon its current first-past-the-post system in favour of a mixed-member proportional representation system, which thankfully has a short form of MMP.

Back then, the minister who introduced the bill publicly endorsed a transition to a mixed-member proportional—MMP—representation system, but is now in favour of ranked ballots. It's amazing what can happen in just maybe nine years. One wonders why the minister flip-flopped on this issue, as they are two radically different electoral systems. Did the minister fall out of love with the MMP system because it didn't help the Liberal Party as much?

At the time, the minister responsible for democratic renewal said, "Our democracy belongs to its citizens, and it is the voters of this province that should decide how their representatives should be elected."

Linda Jeffrey, who was a parliamentary assistant at that time, said the following back in 2007 in regard to potential electoral reform—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What did she say?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you for asking. She said this: "We believe a decision of this magnitude deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across the province, and the proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision."

Mr. John Yakabuski: She was right.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We agree wholeheartedly. When it comes to changing electoral systems, regardless of which system we may move towards, I believe that the people should have some say. It should absolutely not be left up to those who are in power to stack the deck in

their favour. Even if the door is left open to the possibility of such actions, it should be closed by requiring the support of the people.

The Liberals required 60% of Ontarians to vote in favour of changing our electoral system back in 2007 and by 50% of the vote in each of at least 64 of the 107 electoral districts. This threshold was decided by the Ontario cabinet despite the recommendations of a select committee that it require only 50% support in 71 of the 107 ridings. Imagine that. This is very intriguing.

When it came to implementing a proportional representation system, one that typically is less kind to incumbents, the Ontario Liberal cabinet decided that they needed to go above and beyond the level of consent recommended by the select committee. Fifty per cent consent was advised, but the Liberals required 60%.

When it comes to ranked ballots, a system that experts say would benefit the Liberal Party, they're perfectly fine with having no consent whatsoever. Why did they require such a high level of public support to change to a system that stood to hurt them, but now require no public support for a system that benefits them?

1610

There is far from unanimous support for ranked ballots. In the 2007 referendum, the provincial government set the threshold for electoral change at 60% support, which is consistent with British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. Now, according to the latest poll, in Toronto, there is less than 60% support for ranked ballots.

But we know now why the Liberals are singing a different tune. As dictated by their leader, electoral reform doesn't need to bother with actually asking the public what they want. No, no, no; it's a lot simpler than that, according to the Liberals. You simply just have one person who is in a position of power make up a few new rules by themselves. But does the Ontario Liberal definition of democracy match the actual definition?

Let's talk about some Greek words here. The ancient Greek word for democracy was actually a compound word, a combination of two words into one. The first is "demos," which in ancient Greek means "people." Note that it does not mean "person" or "Premier sitting at a kitchen table over the weekend." It's a pretty key component to the whole thing; it has to be plural. The second word in democracy is "kratos," meaning power. If you combine the two words—

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls:—you're absolutely right—if you combine the two words, you get "people power," or "power of the people."

To protect our democracy, we need to ensure it is open to all people, not just certain classes of people who can afford to take lengthy leaves of absence from work. We also need to ensure that the people do have a say in their electoral system, not just the people in power.

If this bill passes as it currently is written today, it could have a damaging impact on many municipalities and towns that rely on volunteer firefighters. A question

for you is this, Mr. Speaker: What if a fire breaks out during a debate in a municipality where a volunteer firefighter is running for local office? A fire truck pulls up outside to pick up the volunteer and firefighters who are inside to support their colleague who is running for office. The front door flies open and the volunteers in the crowd jump up to head outside, but as they look back at the stage, they notice that their friend isn't able to help them join the fight. One of the volunteers calls back, "There's a fire. Let's go. Come on. Why aren't you coming to help?" The volunteer firefighter candidate, according to this bill, says, "I can't help because the Liberals passed Bill 181 without an amendment."

Speaker, that may be a bit humorous and hypothetical, but this type of situation would be possible if the bill passes as is. Bill 181 seeks to remove the leave-of-absence exemption for volunteer firefighters, meaning that if they run for municipal office, they are unable to volunteer for their community for a minimum of 13 weeks. We don't want to see people forced between serving or saving their communities and their neighbours.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, we rely on approximately 325 volunteer firefighters across the municipality, specifically in Chatham-Kent. It takes a tremendous amount of commitment to be a volunteer firefighter in my riding, as it would take a tremendous amount of commitment for a volunteer firefighter in any of the ridings, really. You have to be willing to put in the work before you can be a volunteer.

The auxiliary firefighter program is approximately seven months in duration and consists of 14 training sessions that are attended by all auxiliary candidates and rotated amongst Chatham-Kent's volunteer stations. Sessions consist of minor to moderate firefighting knowledge and techniques. Once you've gotten that out of the way, you still need to meet the rest of the eligibility criteria before you can be considered for a volunteer position. It can take roughly a year, from start to finish, to become a volunteer firefighter.

We don't want to keep good people from seeking public office. In the case of a volunteer firefighter, their commitment to their communities is very clear. Considering the amount of time it takes to become a volunteer firefighter, forcing them to give up helping their community for a minimum of over three months if they want to seek public office seems somewhat ridiculous. The message this would send to these individuals would essentially be, "We're glad you want to serve your community through public office, but to do it, you first have to stop serving your community." Wait a minute: "We're glad you want to serve your community through public office, but you have to do it by first stopping to serve your community"?

Mr. Todd Smith: That just doesn't make sense.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Is there an oxymoron in there? That doesn't make much sense. You're absolutely right; you must have written this. That doesn't make sense to me, nor does it make sense to volunteer firefighters, and it doesn't make sense to Ontario.

What it means is this: We either lose out on qualified individuals who would otherwise have been able to seek public office to further serve their communities, or it could potentially mean that some communities will be short of the trained people they need to fight fires and save lives. Either way, we don't want to force people to choose between volunteering for their communities to save lives and trying to make their communities better places by running for office. We do not want to see the leave-of-absence exemption removed for volunteer firefighters, and we are hopeful that the government will be willing to address this with a sensible amendment in committee.

I'm hesitant to support any bill that has the potential to take volunteer firefighters away from any of the communities in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. You know what, Speaker? I'll bet you dollars for doughnuts—the old saying—that there isn't one member in this Legislature who wouldn't be hesitant to support taking away any volunteer firefighters from their riding as well. I sincerely hope that the other side—the government—hears this and sorts out that part of the bill. We cannot force people to choose between serving their communities and saving them.

It isn't just volunteer firefighters who should be concerned with other elements of this bill as well. Another major concern this bill has attempted to address is that municipal election campaigns are simply far too long. I remember being here in Toronto at Queen's Park back in 2014 as the Toronto mayoral election campaign kicked off. I was taken aback at how early the campaign seemed to start.

Despite the fact that the election itself took place on October 27 of that year, the campaign essentially lasted nearly a year, because registration of candidates began back on January 2. Then began the seemingly endless speculation about who would or would not be running. John Tory registered in February, with the eventual third-place finisher, Olivia Chow, entering the race a month later. By the time October came around, the city had been in campaign mode for 10 months. Clearly that's far too long.

Election campaigns of such great length discourage new participants from seeking office, as many are unable to fund a campaign for that long. That's not what we want to see. Even the average person who has no intention of running for office deserves a break from campaigns from time to time.

Numerous groups raised concerns about the length of municipal elections, including members of the PC caucus, with many saying, like I just said, that they're far too long. Under Bill 181, registration for municipal elections will now begin on May 1 instead of January 1. That's certainly less ridiculous than a 10-month campaign period.

We support the move to shorten the length of municipal elections through moving the registration date forward a few months. However, we do have some significant concerns about the decision to move the nom-

ination cut-off date to the fourth Friday in July instead of the second Friday in September. That's roughly an extra month and half—close to two months. This will have a direct negative impact on people who want to run for council, and will actually result in an even longer writ period.

Campaigns unofficially begin when candidates register, but other than what takes place in Toronto, most of the activity starts once the field of candidates is finalized after the registration cut-off date. Moving the cut-off date more than 13 weeks, or three months, ahead of the election date will have a couple of serious consequences. Firstly, it will mean that many qualified candidates simply will not seek office.

1620

I want my fellow members to recall when they first registered to become a candidate for public office. Some of my colleagues, in fact, may have great difficulty remembering that long ago, but there was still a time when each and every one of us decided to take that leap of faith and register as candidates to run for our party. We were fortunate, as all of us in this Legislature are, to have been voted in by our constituents. As I look around the Legislature, I just wonder how many current members registered their candidacy as far in advance as this bill would require. How many of us would not be standing here today if we were subjected to these requirements? A lot of deep soul-searching goes into deciding to run for office. It's a decision that should not be taken lightly and is not an easy one to make.

As our critic, the member for Oxford, astutely pointed out during his lead, this change would have an especially strong impact on municipal employees. By moving the registration cut-off period from six weeks prior to the election date to an outstanding 13 weeks, it will force municipal employees to be off the job for over three months if they want to seek public office. That would include firefighters and even police officers. In addition to municipal employees, this will have a negative impact on community leaders and other citizens who are considering seeking public office.

We should be doing everything in our power to make running for office more accessible. We should be breaking down barriers, not building them up. These changes are incredibly worrisome. How many people actually take a three-month leave of absence from their job? How many people can afford to go unpaid for three months? This means that the vast majority of people will be unable to run for public office. This, Speaker, is incredibly concerning.

What is also rather worrisome about this is that it will mean that even less people will consider seeking office, which narrows the pool of potential elected officials even further. Perhaps the government only wants certain types of people to be able to run for office: a political class with the resources to take extended leaves from work or the financial ability to go without pay for a few months.

Maybe the government doesn't want to make it easier for the average person to run for office. But if they truly

share a commitment to open up public office for the entire public, not just a certain political class that can afford to run, then the Liberals will address this portion of the bill. The bill proposed by the Liberal government seeks to implement a method of determining governments that experts describe as typically benefiting parties like the Liberal Party, all of this without any required consent from impacted citizens. No individual or party can be trusted with single-handedly changing our electoral system, especially if it may have been written on the back of a napkin.

Bill 181 would create new barriers to people seeking out public office, when we should be doing all we can do to get new ideas and perspectives in government. We need good, qualified people who care about making a difference—municipally, provincially, perhaps even federally as well. Speaker, unless there are, in fact, significant amendments made to this bill at the committee stage—and now I'm appealing to the government, because all committees are stacked with Liberals who can either say yea or nay to amendments; and if past performance is an indication of future performance, a lot of those amendments will be turned down if they're offered by either opposition party.

Again, having said that, I would be very much hesitant to support moving forward.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some thoughts on the comments from the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who has pointed out some of the cautionary aspects of this bill. Certainly, from my perspective as an MPP for London, I know that my community is enthusiastic about the prospect of moving forward with ranked balloting for the municipal election in 2018. But that municipal election is more than two years in the future, and the timing of this bill raises some questions, quite frankly. It was introduced on April 4, in the midst of the maelstrom of controversy that we saw over the Liberals and their campaign donations—the questions that were asked about what big money buys from the government in terms of responding with policy changes or legislative changes. Some people have asked whether this bill was an effort to change the channel, to deflect attention away from campaign donations at the provincial level and instead focus at the municipal level.

The bill does include an option for a municipal council to introduce prohibitions on campaign donations by unions and corporations. This is only an option, however, and there is some concern that municipalities may not want to take up that option because the bill also links campaign donations to the right to express an opinion on an issue. So only those who are eligible to make donations are eligible to express an opinion on an issue, which could actually stifle public expression in this province.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to rise again and offer my comments to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I certainly respect the member's opinion, but I do question some things, Speaker. The question is about math. Now, I'm not suggesting that I'm a math expert, but I fail to understand how starting an election campaign on January 2 versus May 1, with the same election date, lengthens the time of the writ period. I hope he could explain that, because frankly, we saw in the last election where people were campaigning from January 2 right to the last minute, which they're allowed to do. Now they're not going to be able to register or spend any money until May 1. So if he could please explain about the Tory math that he's using, it would be helpful.

He talked about ranked ballots. It's probably not something that they would support, but we're leaving the option to the municipality. Many times, I've heard members from the opposition say that they do respect municipal government as a fair level of government, a mature level of government. That's exactly what we're trying to do: We're trying to allow that option, but those municipalities will have that option to exercise it. There are a number of ways they can do it: by having a public meeting, an open house, and, if they so wish, even a referendum.

So those options are there. Being a former municipal politician, a member of municipal government, I appreciate that flexibility.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do want to thank my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex for his calm remarks today on Bill 181, changes to the municipal act—I don't have the exact title in front of me. He talked about the referendum on ranked balloting. That, for me, is the key problem with this bill.

As I said in my short remarks yesterday—I didn't get a chance to speak to the bill, but I did get a chance to do a response—we have had the same method of electing our representatives since Confederation and before. I'm not standing here and saying that because we've had it that long, it's perfect and there's no need for it to change. We've had changes in many minor ways. But when you're going to change dramatically, I mean completely, the method by which you elect representatives, then you need to go to a referendum, which is what happened—to the credit of the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty—in 2007, when there was this big hullabaloo about mixed-member proportional, and they went to a referendum. They allowed the people of Ontario to make the determination as to whether we would make those kinds of dramatic, critical changes to how we elected representatives to this chamber.

1630

The people of Ontario said no—not the government; not the Premier; not the Premier's office; the people of Ontario said no. So we need to have the same system in place if you're going to have ranked ballots.

No municipality is asking for the ranked ballot. Toronto had asked, and they've withdrawn that request. They no longer want it. Nobody is asking for it. What's the

need to proceed with that? If you do, you have a referendum.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and, today, to comment on the remarks from the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I listened intently to his well-delivered and well-thought-out remarks. Although I don't necessarily agree with everything he said, he brought out some points that are relevant in my community.

I don't think that ranked ballots are really high on the list of people's concerns in Timiskaming–Cochrane. But there are some things in this bill—specifically, who can run for public office—that are a big concern, because if you take volunteer firefighters out of the equation in very small municipalities, you're taking some of the best candidates out of the equation, or you're knocking out your fire department. It's one of two options. So that's one big shortcoming in this bill that has to be changed.

I'll have a few minutes later on to speak longer. The campaign donations and a lot of those things won't make a big difference in small towns, specifically in rural Ontario. Should we look at these? Yes. It does make one wonder why this bill was dropped on us in the middle of problems with government campaign financing. That certainly leads one to wonder what the purpose is. Is this actually trying to help the democratic process, or is it mere muddying of the waters? So far, from what I've seen from the government side, I would say it's the latter of the two.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I would like to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Northumberland–Quinte West, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and, of course, Timiskaming–Cochrane for their words of advice, in some cases, and their questions, in other cases, as well.

Just to be more clear to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: I believe what I had stated was the fact that registration would now begin on May 1 of that election year, and that the nomination cut-off has been moved ahead 13 weeks. It would then start on the fourth Friday in July, as opposed to, I think it was, the second Friday in September. It has been moved. It's earlier now, 13 weeks. That's the nomination cut-off date. Usually, as soon as they register, candidates actually begin campaigning, as well. I hope that perhaps clarifies some of the confusion—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's shorter.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, it's 13 weeks longer, the nomination—

Mr. Bill Walker: They're not good at math over there.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes, that's all right.

Now, the other thing that I had spoken about was the ranked balloting. That seems to have some serious implications as well. Again, one of the biggest reasons why

we're concerned about that is due to a lack of consultation.

Past performance is an indication of future performance. We know that in past performance, this government really gets a D—maybe even an F—in consultation. We're wondering if, in fact, they're going to be scoring a D or an F in consultation on this one as well. There has been such a lack thereof.

The other concern that I have is, again, talking about volunteer firefighters and leave of absence. So we'll leave the rest to others who, I'm sure, will be bringing those issues to light a little bit further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Windsor West to speak to legislation in this chamber. Today we're discussing Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, but before I get into my notes, Speaker, I wanted to point out you are looking awfully chipper today, even though the Jays lost last night. I'm thinking maybe you're hopeful they'll have better results—I think they have a game tonight, right? Hopefully, they'll have better results tonight. I noticed when I was there last night that there were several fans who weren't too happy with what was going on. We had a few fights in the stands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A couple of fights. Not me.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I assure you that the current Speaker was not one of the fans fighting in the stands, but I'm sure he wasn't happy with the outcome regardless.

Let's begin with the intent of this legislation: It's to strengthen local democracy by giving municipalities the right to adopt ranked ballots and ban corporate and union donations, with new restrictions on third-party advertising, simplified campaign finance rules and new provisions to ensure accessibility.

Speaker, I can tell you that I have yet to have a constituent in Windsor West, or in the broader Windsor area, come forward and really express concerns about the way our municipal elections take place. My constituents are more concerned about the cost of hydro rising, the continued sell-off of Hydro One, the cuts to health care, the cuts to education, the cuts to autism services. This particular piece of legislation is really not on the radar. I'm hoping that after some discussion today, it might spark some interest from my constituents, so I'll be able to get some feedback, but really, at this time, my constituents have pressing concerns around access to health care and education and such.

I think members of this chamber will agree that this is an ambitious piece of legislation, but the objectives are, overall, good. New Democrats support reforms that strengthen our municipal democracy and that get the influence of big money out of politics. Now, as they say, the devil is in the details. Decoding these details, consulting on legislation—all of this takes time. And I'm not

talking about the nine days that we've had since they tabled this legislation. It takes a lot more time than that.

Instead of giving opposition MPPs and stakeholders a real opportunity to digest this legislation, this government is again—and this a pattern we see over and over and over—rushing legislation through the House. Stakeholders are concerned that they are not receiving enough time to properly consider this legislation. Some go as far as saying that Bill 181 will actually stifle democracy rather than enhance it.

Again, I want to go back to the importance of consultation. We hear the government side say they're consulting; we hear them stand up with their speaking notes and talk about who they've spoken to and how these people are in support. They don't actually talk about the number of people they've spoken to or those people who aren't in support. They tend to play the game so that everything they bring up is in their favour, and then they try to silence the opposition members who are charged with bringing forward the voice of our communities. Really, that's saying to the people in our communities, "Your opinion doesn't matter. We only want to hear from the people who are going to take our side, the people who are going to say that we're right and are going to back us when we ram this legislation through." I think that's really unfortunate, because it's the government's job to listen to the opposition, to listen to our constituents and act on behalf of all Ontarians, not just those who agree with them and not just the party faithful, those members of their own government. I think it's really important that they listen to everybody.

I also think it's interesting that, as other members have mentioned, this legislation came forward April 4, right in the midst of a controversy over the Liberal government's own fundraising practices. So again we see that something bubbles to the surface, something they don't want people to know about, and so they make a big announcement or they bring through legislation to try to hide the fact that something's coming to the surface that people aren't going to be very happy about. I think that's really unfortunate. That's not really being open and transparent, as they like to claim to be.

Speaker, Ontarians, stakeholders and other organizations impacted by this legislation need to be consulted, and once they're consulted, they need to be listened to. Too often, this government participates in surface-level consultations. This is when they've already made up their mind on an issue and then simply go through the motions of consultations, without actually listening to the people in the province or listening to the elected members in opposition that are bringing forward the voice of people in this province.

1640

There's a saying that says, "Just because we have spoken doesn't mean we've communicated." I think people are getting really tired of feeling like they've come to government, and they've spoken to the government, but they haven't really communicated because the government side, the Liberal side, is not willing to listen

to them. They're not willing to take into consideration those people that don't support their ideas or those people that come forward and say, "That seems like a good idea, but we would like to see changes. We'd like to see it tweaked a bit." So I think people are getting really tired of wasting their time and their energy, frankly, speaking to a government that seems to want to do whatever it is they want to do, and they're not willing to listen to anybody else.

I think we just have to look—just recently, in fact. There are many examples; for instance, the pre-budget consultations. The consultations took place. The government pretended to be listening to people. People wasted their time, energy and, in some cases, money to travel, to prepare for the consultations, to come to these consultations, only to find out that, before the report came from the committee, the budget was not only already drawn up, it was printed, it was translated into French and it was ready to go. We didn't receive the report until after the budget was already tabled. I think that's a clear example of the government ramming through their agenda rather than listening to the people of Ontario.

Another issue: provincial and demonstration school consultations. Now, I'm happy to announce that, today, the minister said that she would reopen enrolment for these schools for the 2016-17 school year. But I do have to point out that when she was speaking to the media earlier, she would not commit to actually keeping these programs open for that entire school year—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm just wondering if the member opposite could actually stick with Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. It might be helpful for the sake of debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, the member has drifted quite a bit, and I've been pretty lenient. So could you maybe come back toward the bill once in a while to make it legit, please?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. It's always interesting when the Minister of Transportation shows up in the House. You get a lot of exercise, up and down out of your chair, when he's in the room.

I was tying it back to the bill, in fact: We're talking about consultation with the public—talking to municipalities, talking to voters, consulting and actually listening. I was tying that into the fact that, when we're looking at school closures, there's a process that they say has taken place with consultations, but they haven't actually been listening to those people they're consulting with, just like they haven't really given people an opportunity to consult on this particular piece of legislation. The same thing has happened with the child care regulations that they were going to ram through: They weren't going to listen to the people of Ontario, just like with this bill.

They bring it forward during a controversy—one on their side, around fundraising—and nine days later, we are on day 3 of second reading. In nine days, we've made

it to second reading, day 3, on a bill that—there is no possible way that the broader public could possibly have been made aware of this bill, read the bill, formulated questions or concerns or given appropriate feedback. There's no way the municipalities have had time to look at these and give feedback. So I think it's really important, as much as the Minister of Transportation likes to get up on a point of order and try and get me to stop talking about it. There is no way that people have had an opportunity to really consult on this. I think that's a clear example of trying to stifle conversation on it, in fact.

The provisions in this bill allow municipalities to use ranked ballots. School board trustees will not be subject to the option of ranked ballots at this time, but the door has been left open for that to change in the future. Municipalities have the options of banning corporate and union donations. Clerks must prepare an accessibility plan before election day as well as post an election accessibility report. There are simplified campaign finance rules and shorter campaign periods—starting in May instead of January.

Talking about third-party advertising, there is no lower threshold below which smaller third parties would be exempt from the third-party advertising restrictions. All other Canadian jurisdictions set a lower spending threshold of \$500 or \$1000 in their third-party advertising laws. So there has been no adjustment here. Third parties that incur advertising expenses, including those that spend just a few dollars, face compliance obligations similar to those of a candidate.

There are concerns that a municipality may be less likely to ban corporate and union donations if they must silence community groups at the same time. I think that's a key piece when people feel they can't express an opinion. If something comes forward that they don't agree with, this legislation could potentially stifle their ability to come forward and say, "We have concerns about that."

It's really muddying the waters between a person's ability to freely speak about what they support and don't support. I think that ties back perfectly to something I said earlier about the government only talking about people who have come forward—their friends, maybe—in support of proposed legislation, but they don't talk about people who don't support it. My concern is that this is going to stifle the voices of Ontarians, rather than opening up opportunities for them to be fully consulted and make a difference in legislation that comes through this House.

There are other provisions. There is no tightening of enforcement to stop candidates from overspending and no consideration of voting rights for permanent residents. To not even consider voting rights for permanent residents is very problematic, especially for people in my riding of Windsor West. When I'm in the community campaigning, or even just knocking on doors checking in on my constituents, I hear how frustrated permanent residents are about this issue. They are members of my community and want to participate in the democratic

process, and it's really frustrating when their spouses are citizens and are able to vote. You have some members of a household who are able to participate in the democratic process and others who cannot.

I can tell you that my riding—Windsor itself is very diverse, but I think that we in Windsor West probably experience the most diversity. We have a lot of people who choose to come to Canada and live in Ontario—more specifically, in Windsor and in my riding of Windsor West—and I can tell you that my office gets many calls from people who are of the impression that because they can't vote, it means they don't have representation. I think it's unfortunate for them to think they don't have a voice because they are not able to vote in a provincial election.

I think it becomes even more confusing for people, and frankly more disappointing, when they've chosen Ontario as their home and are made permanent residents, but they don't have a say in the decisions we make in this House or the decisions that are made at the municipal level. I think it's a very important piece of democracy that those people who choose to come to Ontario and choose a city to live in—whether it's Windsor or Toronto or a northern city, wherever they choose to live—feel like they're part of that democratic process and get to say, "This is who I would like to be my representative provincially, this is who I'd like my city councillor to be, and this is who I'd like my mayor or my school board trustees to be." I think it's very unfortunate that that wasn't considered in the legislation.

Again, we shouldn't be giving people the idea that they can't have a say or that they don't have a say. We want a government that claims to be open and transparent, and we actually want them to be open and transparent. We expect the same from our municipal partners. We need people to know that if they're not happy with the performance of someone who is an elected official, they have the right to cast their vote for someone else the next time around. They need to know that they do, indeed, have a say in democracy.

Part of the issue is that third parties that incur advertising expenses, including individuals who spend just a few dollars, face compliance obligations that are similar to those of a candidate. If they make a mistake with their paperwork, an individual or small community group could be banned from advertising in the next election and could even face a fine of up to \$25,000 for an individual or \$50,000 for a corporation, as well as a six-month prison term. Imagine that, Speaker: Someone who doesn't really know the legislation, someone who's not clear on the legislation, makes an honest mistake, and there are very stiff penalties for that.

1650

People need to know that the government is doing everything possible to make legislation clear and make the rules clear, because I think you will find that the majority of people really want to do the right thing. They want to follow the rules, they want to do the right thing and they certainly don't want to be breaking the law. I think that when you're ramming through legislation like

this, and there hasn't really been fair consultation and it's not clear what everybody's rights and obligations are, you may find more and more people who are inadvertently breaking the rules. They're facing very stiff penalties: \$25,000 for an individual who might just accidentally break the rules, and they could end up in prison for it. We could go on about the prison system and how it would be unfortunate for someone to accidentally break the law and not even realize they've done that, and end up in a prison system that is already overcrowded and understaffed, but if I was to go on about that, I'm sure the Minister of Transportation would get up on a point of order and point out that I'm out of line—because they don't want to hear about those issues either, frankly.

The other unfortunate piece of this, the flaw in it, is that Bill 181 inexplicably links the right to promote an issue to the right to make a campaign contribution. Since Toronto bans corporate union donations, Bill 181 would silence all Toronto NGOs, charities and community groups that speak out on an issue during a six-month campaign, to oppose the proposal. Again, this is actually potentially stifling democracy, by not allowing people to voice their concerns. It's the government's way of saying, "If you're in opposition to something, we don't want to hear about it." I think that's unfortunate, because that's how we grow and we learn. That's how you come forward with better legislation. That's how municipalities make better decisions for the people that they represent. They want to hear the good and they want to hear the bad, and often, out of the bad they get suggestions. They get good suggestions, and sometimes they're not-so-good suggestions. But often they'll get good suggestions from the people who live in that municipality on how to make the municipality better, and I think to put rules in place that are actually banning people from being able to say, "I don't like something," is a little heavy-handed. I think it's our obligation, as elected officials, whether it's at the municipal level, the provincial level, the federal level, school boards—our job is to listen to both the good and the bad, listen to those people who agree with us and those people who don't agree with us.

Not everybody has the opportunity that the Minister of Transportation does to stand up and say, "Point of order: I think they're out of line. Let's bring it back." We need people to have that right to say, "I don't agree with what you're saying. Let's sit down and talk about it. Hear my side of it and maybe, just maybe, you might change your mind." Every elected official needs to be open-minded, willing to listen to the people. Whether it's someone who has voted for you or not, you are elected to represent them. We need to make sure that when people are voting, they have the opportunity to say to candidates, "I don't like something that you've spoken about. I don't like a position you're taking. I'd like you to explain it to me. I'd like to explain to you why I don't like it," and give a candidate the opportunity to change their position on something.

I think that a municipality would be far less likely to ban corporate and union donations if they must silence

community groups at the same time. I don't think any municipality really wants to shut down the voice of their community, the people in the community. We wouldn't have city councillors, we wouldn't have mayors, we wouldn't have MPPs, we wouldn't have MPs, if it wasn't for our constituents. I don't think that any municipality wants to completely shut out the voice of their communities; maybe the Liberal government does, but I don't think the municipalities want to, and I think that would be a very unfortunate side effect of this legislation here.

Again, there's no tightening of enforcement to stop candidates from overspending their limit, and there is no consideration of voting rights for permanent residents. I think that putting an idea forward is one thing; follow-through is another. If you really want to reform the way elections are run, the way campaigns are done, it really has to be a democratic process. You need to have a lot of people at the table and take the time to have these conversations. It's not something you do on a napkin at your kitchen table; it's not something you do when you have friends over for dinner: figure out how you're going to change the laws that affect thousands of people. It's something that takes a great deal of thought and a great deal of consultation. I don't think, nor do many of my colleagues, whether in my caucus or the PC caucus, that there has been any real consultation done on this bill, considering that it has been nine days since it has been introduced. It couldn't possibly have been vetted properly through the municipalities and through the constituents that it's going to affect.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's always a pleasure to follow fast on the heels of a misguided member of the New Democratic Party here in this chamber, Speaker. I want to congratulate the member for her remarks, especially after you advised her to stick to the actual debate that we are involved in this afternoon on Bill 181. I recognize that after she was sufficiently admonished by the Chair, she did turn her attention to the debate at hand.

I know there are a number of people in the chamber who have served municipally throughout their careers and others who have sought office municipally. In 2010, before I became the member of provincial Parliament for Vaughan, I had the chance to run municipally in my community, in the city of Vaughan, and wasn't successful. Though it was my first time running as a candidate, I did get to—not surprisingly—experience the ins and outs of a number of the issues that are addressed in this legislation first-hand, in that case.

I can tell you, Speaker, that a number of the initiatives that will empower our municipal partners—for example, some of the campaign finance reform initiatives, the timing of the electoral calendar and other initiatives that are contained in Bill 181—will actually go a long way, perhaps, in a most transformational way, towards making that system of municipal campaigns across the 444 communities—well, I'll say "443" because, in some re-

spects, the city of Toronto already has some of these powers. For the remainder of the communities across the province of Ontario, bringing about a level playing field and bringing about a certain degree of equality and parity with respect to what already exists, in some respects, in the city of Toronto is a good thing.

I don't have enough time to get into the issue of whether or not we should be considering extending voting rights to permanent residents, but I will say that I don't personally support that. I think the bar to becoming a citizen in this country is relatively low for those who are interested in seeking that outcome, which then, of course, gives you the chance to vote in our election campaigns.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I have the pleasure to speak to Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. I spoke for 20 minutes yesterday, and I'm going to just repeat a few things here.

It's definitely a big, big concern that I want to get on the record again: No government should be making unilateral changes to the system under which they would be getting elected. It's just inappropriate that one party would ever think that they should be able to do this and that they actually have the knowledge and the wisdom. It should certainly be a case where all three parties are around the table. Very similarly, my leader, Patrick Brown, has asked to make sure that we have a select committee to talk about fundraising and third-party advertising going forward.

I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that this government has proposed a bill that actually talks about third-party advertising and yet they voted it down three times. My colleague Ted Arnott, my colleague Rick Nicholls and I have all presented third-party advertising private members' bills in this House, and that government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, voted unanimously against them. Yet now, all of a sudden, they think that they should bring this out and that there are issues. So I'm a little torn about why, all of a sudden, it's a thing they want but they didn't do it when they had the opportunity back in October. As recently as October, the elections officer for Ontario, Greg Essensa, had brought that in two or three of his reports, saying it was a key priority.

I'm very concerned that they would actually think that anything that's going to change the fundamental democratic right of a voter voting for who is going to be representing them could be done by one party anywhere, regardless of what political stripe might think that—but especially with the trust of this government and what we've had over the last number of years that I've been here.

Mr. Speaker, this bill with ranked ballots—our fear, again, is that it's not something that should be done overnight. There's suspicion that they would be doing it for their own advantage. I don't necessarily say that, but

that's what I hear in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. So we definitely want the people to have a referendum and a say.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Windsor West on her comments on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. She made some really excellent points that I think we should reflect on carefully in this chamber. In particular, she talked about the lack of consultation.

1700

We've heard from the Liberals across the way that there were 4,000 comments or pages or whatever that were submitted in advance of this bill, but that is consultation before the bill was developed. It does appear, given the problems with some of the provisions of this bill, that it was rushed through without doing the proper consultation on the actual drafting of the bill once the legislation was written.

We know, for example, that the third-party advertising provisions, which are modelled after the third-party laws that are in place in BC, are currently subject to a Supreme Court challenge. Why the government would have brought the exact same provisions that are being challenged in the Supreme Court in BC into Ontario—it raises all kinds of questions.

We know that stakeholders that we have communicated with feel that they have had nowhere near enough time to be able to digest the bill, to do the kind of analysis that is necessary to understand what the legal implications are in terms of freedom of expression, given the restrictions on third-party advertising.

I know that ranked ballots are welcomed by some people in this province, in particular in my community of London. But I'm very concerned because Bill 181 brings a number of different things together, and it's a really mixed bag.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure again to rise in the House to make a few comments to the member from Windsor West.

Let's bring it back a little bit. What we're doing with Bill 181 is something that we do after every municipal election. It's not something that just started out of the blue. It's something that we have to do, to review the Municipal Elections Act after every municipal election.

I want to focus a little bit on the consultation, because the member, when she was speaking about Bill 181, spent quite a bit of time on the lack of consultation.

I know that AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, had an opportunity to give us input on this. The concept of where we wanted to go was presented. They were expecting it, because it's something you do after every election. There were some 3,400 inputs from municipal leaders and members of the public on what this should look like at the end of the day.

The minister has made a commitment to visit—and he did, last year—over 200 municipalities. I presume a lot of

the discussion was around this piece of legislation. We spoke with folks—I know I did as parliamentary assistant—both at AMO and the ROMA/Good Roads convention. I heard that we needed more consultation. Part of the process here, as we all know, is that after second reading—hopefully this passes second reading—it will go to committee, and there will again be input for consultation.

I just want to say that this is a bill that was presented. We're doing second reading. It'll go to committee. Hopefully we'll hear some good suggestions that can make the bill better.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from London West and the member from Northumberland-Quinte West for all sharing their thoughts with me on the debate on Bill 181.

I'd like to start, Speaker, by saying I'm sure you're going to sleep a lot better tonight knowing that the Minister of Transportation approves of the way that you do your job. I'm sure that'll make you feel a lot better tonight.

I'd like to touch on what the member for Northumberland-Quinte West said, because I think it really drives the point home of what the member from London West said. I'm not sure that he was listening when she made her point, because he just actually made her point for her. He said that they spoke to AMO about the concept and the direction they wanted to go around legislation to reform the Municipal Elections Act. They spoke about a concept, what the government would like to do and what AMO would like, which is fantastic. That's great. Ask for opinions before drafting the bill.

Our point—the point the member from London West made—is that that's very different than actually consulting on a bill once it's drafted. It's very different. It's great to go out and say, “We'd like your ideas.”

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm getting the hand from the member for Northumberland-Quinte West; apparently, the truth hurts.

It's great to go out and ask for input on what should be in a bill, but they can sneak all kinds of stuff into a bill—make it wordy, make it muddy and then say, “Well, we consulted.” The municipalities and the people who live in those municipalities need to have a say in what is actually written in the bill; not the concept but the legislation that is actually being proposed.

I have to thank the member for Northumberland-Quinte West for driving home the point that the member from London West was making. Clearly, the government thinks that just throwing an idea out there is consultation. Frankly, it's not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on this motion for

second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We wish to continue the debate.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here this afternoon on Bill 183. Do you know what? Horse races are a lot of fun. We've all been involved in horse races over the years. Prior to arriving here, I was the news director at Quinte Broadcasting in Belleville—

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Did I say “183”?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes.

Mr. Todd Smith: I meant to say “181”. Thank you. I apologize. It happens. Bill 181 is what we're debating here this afternoon, which is actually the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016. The critic is here, so I've got to get it right.

As I was saying, as a former news director at Quinte Broadcasting, I used to love election campaigns. It was a lot of fun. There were a lot of interesting things happening and interesting characters in the race.

From time to time, even at a small radio station in eastern Ontario, we would have polls. I know that one of the things we experience on a larger scale at the provincial level and, of course, the federal election that we just went through a few months back, is that there's a lot of polling that goes on. It's fun for broadcasters to follow the polls; that's for sure. I think it probably drives people crazy in their homes—all the phone calls they're getting from the myriad of pollsters that there are out there. But the bottom line is that these horse races are kind of fun. They make great fodder for radio talk shows and political panels. We get to talk about who is up and who is down in the polls. We get to talk about those polls over the water cooler as well, and who is leading in each electoral district and these kinds of things.

Who didn't watch with a little bit of nervous anxiety a couple of years ago when John Tory fended off challenges from both the right and the left? Who doesn't like talking about the momentum that pollsters are observing as they incessantly bug us in our homes by calling night after night? The answer to all this, really, is the voters. While the talking heads on radio and TV love it, most voters really don't think too much about it.

I've been here for close to five years now, and the only meeting or communication I ever had on this issue was with the people from the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto. They're the only people I've ever talked to about this issue in this building, and I've never talked to anybody in the riding. It's just not something that people are interested in talking about.

My constituents ask me about a whole bunch of other things. They talk to me about the state of our hospitals. They talk to me about the state of health care or soaring electricity rates. They talk to me about keeping demonstration schools open. I actually can't remember a single

time that a person who wasn't making money in the political world talked to me about changing the rules of the game. When a news outlet in Thunder Bay took a poll on this issue, only 17% of people wanted the system changed.

1710

There are multiple instances in the United States where a municipality has unilaterally changed its voting system, fought an election under that system, and then, the first opportunity after the election, went back to the first-past-the-post system, because it works.

As we've seen in this House repeatedly, this government comes down on the side of those in power instead of ensuring that our democracy is protected against being manipulated by those in power. That's why I can't see myself necessarily supporting this bill, although there are some good things in this bill. But I can't see myself supporting this bill unless municipalities have to have a referendum before changing the voting system. It only makes sense; these are the rules of the game. If whoever gets the thimble automatically gets hotels on Park Place and Boardwalk, there isn't a lot of point in playing Monopoly if those are the rules that we're playing by. We're here to reflect the issues, concerns and values of our constituents that we hear about on a daily basis, not to rig the rules to protect the right of a precious few with the levers of power.

Is our democracy perfect? It absolutely isn't; of course not. We'd like more people to vote. On this, I agree with the mayor of Belleville, who said, "I don't think the system is broken.... Someone has to figure out how to get more people out to vote. I'm flabbergasted that people don't exercise their right."

This isn't going to do it. This has nothing to do with getting more people to vote. As a matter of fact, and we've heard a lot about it here this afternoon in the House, it's probably going to make it more complicated for people to vote.

There are some good issues in this legislation—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The Minister of Agriculture has had an ongoing dialogue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, thank you. I appreciate it.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: The member from Peterborough has been elected many times. I wonder if maybe he would have been unseated if there was a ranked ballot.

Hon. Jeff Leal: You never can tell.

Mr. Todd Smith: You never can tell.

But you need to have a referendum if you're going to change the way that people vote. You have to have a referendum if you're going to change the electoral rules. It's really that simple.

We saw a record turnout in the federal election in the fall. It was a record turnout. Nothing changed there. It was a first-past-the-post election. What you have to do is

work harder as a political party to get your point across, or if you're not a political party—if you're a municipal candidate—you have to work hard to get your message out. If your message is a message that resonates with people and inspires the people in your community and your municipality or your township, whatever it might be, you're probably going to get elected because people believe in what you're saying. We don't need to change the way the system works. We just need our politicians to do a better—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's just like *The Muppet Movie*. I already asked the Minister of Agriculture—he's being baited, I know, but it happens.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The one thing about politicians is that they have a lot to say, even when they're not supposed to be speaking, as we've found out in this place. There's even a few guys on my side who are like that—not very many.

I've yet to speak to a politician or a public servant who didn't want more people voting. We all do, even if that means that it takes a little bit longer to canvass a poll at election time. My volunteers get on my case all the time because I'll have 10- and 15-minute conversations on the doorsteps when I'm canvassing. I know many members in the House are probably the same way. You'll be out knocking on doors, you meet a fine gentleman who's mowing his lawn, and you end up talking to him for 10 or 15 minutes about whatever it is that concerns him. I can tell you that it's never about changing the electoral system. It's always about something else: the price of gas for his lawn mower, or the fact that he can no longer use Weed Man anymore to make that grass grow green and get rid of the thistles. It's always something, but it's never, never about electoral reform.

The reason I love to go door to door and talk to people during an election campaign is because those are the real conversations—and those are the conversations that this government hasn't had when it comes to developing or modernizing the electoral system in Ontario. You have to meet with real people and have those real conversations. It's one thing to talk to AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and get a general theme as to what they might like, but at the end of the day—and I keep coming back to that R-word—it's all about the referendum, before we actually put changes in place, and it shouldn't be up to a majority government in Ontario to decide which way that happens.

Nothing I do better informs my work than actually meeting with real people and having conversations on people's doorsteps, and I suppose many of us would say the same thing. So if we can agree that we're best informed by the people who send us to this place, and if we can agree that they should be the ones whose interests are served by the rules of the game, then why don't we let them decide if they want the rules to change? What better, more important decision can we seek the public's opinion on than whether the rules of democracy should change?

We have a hard enough time now getting people to vote. We have a hard enough time convincing people that the operations of the political system are done in their interest. If the members opposite are so sure that the number is greater than the 17% who told Thunder Bay News Watch that they support the change to ranked ballots, then they can prove it.

In 2018, every municipality is printing ballots. Those interested in changing their electoral system can add the question to the bottom of the ballot and let the voters decide. How could there possibly be any objection to this? It would be right there at the bottom of their 2018 municipal election ballot: “Do you believe that we should adopt da da da da?”—and I can’t wait to see how Hansard puts that in the Hansard.

There is one thing, though: We’re being told that we can’t hold a referendum because there’s a referendum bias. We’re told that referendums favour the status quo. People who oppose referendums on electoral reform tell us that we can’t have a referendum because it’s unfair, and if you believe that government is the solution to literally every problem, then I suppose that makes sense. I certainly don’t believe that, because in order to believe that government is the solution to literally every problem, you have to believe that the people running the government know better and that only they are capable of solving a complex problem.

There’s no doubt that informing voters about electoral reform is difficult, but since when has difficulty ever been a reason not to do something? “It’s hard” is a description but it’s not an excuse. We all live and die by this rule every election cycle. It’s hard to convince people the deficit is important or that it isn’t. It’s hard to convince people to reform the beverage alcohol system or not. Anyone who has lived through a 36-day writ period knows that convincing people is hard. It puts miles on your boots or your shoes and puts lines on your face, depending on how the campaign goes. It takes time, it takes money and it takes a heck of a lot of effort to get elected. “It’s hard” has never been an accepted reason anywhere not to do something. If you really believe in it, you tend not to care how hard it is to do, which brings me to why we end up talking about this issue.

Recent examples in the United States have demonstrated that electoral reform discussions tend to pop up when people get election results they don’t necessarily like—I know Aaron Sorkin has been quoted quite a bit in the House by different members of the Legislature—but sometimes, in a democracy, other people win.

Traditionally, when we change the rules of our democracy, we try to do so in a way that advantages or disadvantages no particular party. That’s to keep those who may have a massive conflict of interest from unilaterally rigging the system. But as I said earlier, we’re seeing this as part of an emerging trend whenever the rules of democracy are discussed.

1720

All three parties in this Legislature agree on reforming election financing laws, and there is a section in this bill

on election financing—I’m sure there is—third-party advertising, anyway. Does the Premier allow it to be an organic process? Of course, we’re talking about something completely different here, but I know the Speaker will give me a little bit of latitude. All three parties agree on reforming election financing laws. Does the Premier allow it to be an organic process developed by a committee with equal partisan representation?

Mr. Bill Walker: You would think so.

Mr. Todd Smith: You would think so. But, no, unfortunately, that’s not the case.

My colleague from Simcoe–Grey outlined a very troubling sequence of events wherein donations coincided with government decisions. Does the Premier agree to a public inquiry so potential wrongdoing can be investigated? Of course, no, she doesn’t. The Premier called a meeting of the three party leaders and told them that rules drafted in secret were going to be the new rules, thus single-handedly confirming every voter’s chief suspicion of those in power: that their single and sole purpose is to hold on to that power. I think that’s what we’re seeing here. A number of speakers here this afternoon have talked about the fact that, when a sitting government changes the rules, they’re obviously going to be tempted to change those rules to benefit them down the road.

The other thing is—and I go back to what I was saying earlier—this is not a priority for people. I know it’s something that has to be done, as the member opposite indicated, at the end of every municipal election. There was a lot of talk about the idea that maybe the Legislature would be prorogued after this three-week period. I think a lot of people were believing that that was where we were going to head, that the Legislature was going to be prorogued. There wasn’t new legislation on the order paper for us to discuss. And, then, all of a sudden—boom—there’s Bill 181, which appears out of the blue. There wasn’t a whole lot of consultation or discussion with the people of Ontario about this. But here we are, debating it.

What generally happens when we have bills here in the Legislature is that we have the initial debate at second reading; then we have a closure motion; then it will be rushed into committee; then it will be even more swiftly moved out of committee, with as little consultation or input from the public as possible; and, wham, Bob’s your uncle, the next thing you know, we’ve got this passed into law in Ontario, with very, very little consultation. I fear that’s what might happen here.

That’s why we’ve been talking about select committees and equal representation on these committees, or committees that would have the Chief Electoral Officer having some input as well, or even, in some committees that we’ve been talking about, the Integrity Commissioner involved in that as well.

The member opposite talks about wishful thinking; it really is wishful thinking. They do have a majority government. They do have a majority government, I’ll give them that. They earned their majority government.

Mr. Bill Walker: They shouldn't abuse it.

Mr. Todd Smith: But, as my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has just said, they really shouldn't abuse that power, because something as important as this demands consultation with the public. And it demands more than that, because, as we've been talking about all afternoon, it deserves the public to have the final say on any major changes that are made to our electoral system. The only way you can do that is to have a referendum.

As I said earlier, the ballots are going to be printed, Madam Speaker. The ballots are going to be printed in the fall of 2018, and they're going to have John Smith, and they're going to have Lou Jones and Bill Yakabuski on the ballot.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bill? My own cousin might challenge me?

Mr. Todd Smith: And do you know what? It would be really easy, at the bottom of that ballot, to have one more question: "The government of Ontario has proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act to go to a ranked ballot system. Do you agree? Yes or no?" That's who should be making the decision on this. It shouldn't be a majority government at Queen's Park making a decision that so drastically impacts our electoral system.

Sometimes what happens here—my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke describes it as the guillotine coming down and slicing off debate. He makes a very effective sound effect every time the House leader or deputy House leader moves a closure motion. We've seen that time and time again. They should not be using a blunt instrument—and a guillotine is not a blunt instrument—to pass legislation in this House.

We're all here as elected members from our municipalities taking our marching orders from our constituents to come here and represent them at Queen's Park. We should have the opportunity to express our concerns with this system. But more importantly—again, I'll reiterate the fact—the only way that I will be supporting Bill 181 is to see that referendum question on the bottom of the ballot before any substantial changes are made to the way that we vote in our municipal elections in 2018.

Thank you for our 20 minutes this afternoon, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to the comments from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Many of the concerns that he raises are shared by the members on our side of the row here, in particular around the lack of consultation. I know that the Liberals across the way will talk about all the consultation that was done before the bill was drafted. However, they can do all the consultation that they want and put whatever they want in the bill; what is really critical is the consultation on the draft legislation.

We know that this bill was rushed into the House. It appeared suddenly on April 4 in the midst of all of the

controversy that the Premier was dealing with about campaign financing, which really calls into question whether this bill was given the sort of careful analysis and thought that it required.

For example, there are new third-party advertising provisions that include restrictions on third-party advertising that are, quite frankly, unprecedented in this province. We have seen similar restrictions in BC. Those restrictions are currently subject to a Supreme Court challenge by the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association because of the concern that those third-party advertising laws are creating a chilly climate for smaller groups. They are suppressing the voice of smaller organizations to participate in the electoral process and to raise issues that they are concerned about during municipal campaigns.

These are very real concerns about the content of this bill. It deserves to have much fuller thought and analysis.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight for me to be in the chamber and hear my good friend from Prince Edward–Hastings. We in Peterborough were very sad when the Belleville Bulls left town and relocated to Hamilton, Ontario. We had a great rivalry. If I recall correctly, I think the member from Prince Edward–Hastings may have been the voice of the Belleville Bulls for a period of time during his very distinguished radio career. He added some comments today.

I served in municipal politics. I had the great privilege of being in municipal politics in my hometown of Peterborough from 1985 until the fall of 2003. Then I got elected here in the Ontario Legislature.

You know, it's important, I think, after every municipal election in Ontario—the tradition has been that the election would be reviewed. People would go out and get opinions from people who are elected, people who were not elected, clerks and treasurers who were running the election and people at large.

1730

Bill 181 looks at ways to improve municipal elections in the province of Ontario. My good friend from Prince Edward–Hastings indicated that, if the ranked ballot had been in Peterborough in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997 or 2000, I may not have been successful during those—I must qualify that, in 1991, I did get acclaimed, so we'll take that one out of the mix.

But I think some of the things that we're proposing here—we all want to limit third-party advertising. This is something that the opposition and the third party have been talking about.

So this debate will continue, Mr. Speaker. We'll take this bill on the road, and we'll hear from everybody, from every corner in the province of Ontario.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Which one is standing up here?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The only one at their desk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, okay. I just wondered.

The one from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to listen to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings on Bill 181.

I just want to make mention, again, that this is called debate but nobody actually engages in a debate. When somebody puts forth a position, like the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, the idea here is that the other parties will respond and challenge those arguments with their own evidence. But all we get is debate and then statements from the Liberal side. Even when they have their turn, they just make statements. They don't advance any evidence for their position.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings mentioned frequently the need for referendums and to have public consent and public approval for alterations to the electoral system. Absolutely, it's fundamental in our system of government. I've seen that the Liberals have not responded to that and have sort of shrugged it off with, "Well, governments don't need to go to the people to get consent for these fundamental changes."

I know there are some governments that have never bothered going to get approval. Fidel Castro changed the voting system in Cuba without having a referendum. I know that Kim Jong Il's father changed the voting system in North Korea without going for a referendum. There are examples where governments will unilaterally bring forward electoral reforms, just as Kathleen Wynne is now trying to do both municipally and provincially with the kitchen table or kitchen cabinet napkin process.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise and add my two minutes' worth on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, and comment on the remarks made by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

As my colleague from London West pointed out, we do share some of the concerns with the PC caucus. Most of that is around consultation and consultation being done in earnest; not just saying they're going to consult and they're going to listen, but actually listening to the people who they consult with and taking those things into consideration and putting them into a bill—not just the people who agree with them, but listening to people who don't agree with them and listening to their suggestions.

I think a really important point that the member from London West brought up—and it ties back into consultation—is around the third-party advertising laws. I'm wondering how much research the government has actually done into third-party advertising laws before they put it in this bill because, as the member from London West pointed out, in BC, there is a Supreme Court challenge over third-party advertising laws. It was a Supreme Court challenge by the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, or BC FIPA.

We have concerns about how much thought has actually been put into this legislation. As the government

side has pointed out, they talked to AMO and some other people prior to drafting the legislation to talk about the concept, but we need consultation on the actual drafted bill.

These are concerns that we share with other members on this side of the House from the other party. We need to make sure that this is a very well-thought-out piece of legislation, because it's going to affect the way democracy plays out. We need the government to really consult with people, really listen and take their ideas not just into consideration, but enact some of those ideas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members from London West, Windsor West, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and from Peterborough, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, for their comments here this afternoon on my 20-minute chat on Bill 181.

Do you know what? The bottom line here is that the SS Liberal battleship is taking on water. There are a lot of holes in that ship right now. They're making it up on the go; they're making it up on the fly. They're quickly running out of life preservers; they're pulling them from anywhere they can possibly find one of those life preservers.

They're not just making it up on the fly, they're making it up at the kitchen table. We had a couple of flip-flops today on daycare and demonstration schools. We've had different changes being made over the last couple of days on other issues as well. Suddenly, we had this come-to-reality moment when we decided that we had to change the election financing reforms in the province of Ontario.

Everything that we're seeing is that last grasp. We're hanging on to the railing of the SS Liberal battleship as it's starting to go down. We're doing everything we can to hold on to power. We're throwing legislation in when everybody thought we were going to prorogue just so that we don't get a bad story about proroguing. Now, we're getting bad stories about all kinds of other things.

This Liberal government is taking on water so fast, they're doing everything they can. In this case, they're afraid to consult the people on a referendum on major electoral change in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before we move on to further debate, I'll remind the members that we've had seven hours, and now it's 10-minute hits.

Interjection: Ten-minute rotations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ten-minute rotations.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and debate issues that are of importance to the people of the province and the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. Today, it's Bill 181, Municipal Elections Modernization Act. I can honestly say that since I've been elected—for five years—I have only had one person approach me in the riding regarding any changes to the Municipal Elections Act. That person—I'll give a shout-out to the Green

candidate in the last election—was really enthused about things like this, but no one else. And again, the Green candidate, Max, was in the political class. Politics is really important to Max.

This isn't, in my opinion, an issue that is burning in the hearts of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. I hope that it is an issue that is burning in the hearts of other areas, because it's not in mine. Having said that, Ontario is a vast province with vast issues, and I'm happy to be able to lend my voice to it for a few minutes.

But first, before I start on the issues about it, I'd like to give a shout-out to municipal politicians, and specifically the mayors, reeves and councillors across the province. In my riding, I have 26 mayors and reeves, and I've got a bunch more roads boards, because I have, as a lot of people in northern Ontario have, unorganized townships that have no government, which is a whole other concept.

I'd like to give a shout-out to all of them and specifically to some of them—in one case, the mayor of Cochrane, who represents his town. He also ran provincially. He was a worthy opponent. We don't always agree, but Mr. Politis and I always work together for the benefit of the people of Cochrane, as I do with my other mayors.

1740

I'd like to back up for a second. I heard the chief whip of the Liberal side, as I was listening today, say that she hopes this bill would bring more female representation into municipal politics. I really don't know how this bill is going to do that, but I would like to give a shout-out to Joanne Savage, the mayor of West Nipissing, and to be the first to announce that—you know how in the fall we shut the Legislature down and we go to the plowing match? Well, in 2019, we might have to shut it down for a bit longer, because we're going to go to West Nipissing to the plowing match. That's due in large part to the hard work of Mayor Savage and her council. I would like to give a shout-out for that, because that will be the second time the plowing match comes to northern Ontario. It was great the first time, and it might just be greater the second time. It's a really great achievement.

I spent a bit of time as a councillor in a small township. I was a councillor for 12 years. There have been a few comments here that municipal politicians are the closest to the people, and they are. I recall, when I first got elected here, that we had a class come—I believe it was a grade 6 class from Cochrane. I'm sure all of you will know this picture: They go to the ground staircase, they line all the kids up, and we talk to the kids. I don't know how everyone else does it, but usually I ask, "Do you have any questions?" And this teacher had prepped the kids, because this grade 6 guy—I think it was grade 6—asked me what the difference was between the three levels of government. The teacher had done some prep work there, because in grade 6, I really didn't care about the three levels of government.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You didn't know there were three.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right.

And one of the people from the protocol stepped in and said, "Mr. Vanthof, we can answer that question." I

said, "No, no. I think I can handle that." I said, "If there's a pothole on Railway Street in Cochrane, who do you call?" They said, "You call the mayor," because that's municipal. That's a municipal road. I said, "If there's a pothole on Highway 11, who do you call?" They looked around, and I said, "You call the province. You can call me." I said, "If there's a pothole in a country you've never heard of, who do you call?" You call the federal government. The tour guides thought it was funny. The kids got it.

But the moral of that story is, the people who are the closest to the voter are municipal politicians. And this bill makes a lot of changes to how these politicians, or how these people who are candidates, who put themselves up for office—it makes a lot of changes.

I was very encouraged, and I'm going to hold the Minister of Agriculture to this—in his response, he said that this bill is going to hit the road and travel to all corners of Ontario. Well, it should, because—and the member for London West has mentioned it a couple of times—consulting before the draft is written is a good thing, but consulting with the draft is much more important.

When I read that there is some question of whether a volunteer fireman can be a volunteer fireman and campaign as a candidate at the same time, that is a huge issue in my riding, because there was a couple of reeves who would have had to pick. That's something you might not pick up on in Toronto. I talked to the CUPE people today, and they've got a couple of issues with the professional firemen. Quite frankly, I didn't know anything about that issue, because we have very few professional firefighters in my riding. Out of the 26, I think I've got two municipalities with professionals. So that's something that might not get picked up on here.

I'm sure that there's a bunch of other things that maybe didn't get picked up. That's why all bills should travel but, specifically, this one, because it affects people. They might not even know how it impacts them until after it's done. A few of the things that have happened with this government in the last couple of days, changing—people rising up and saying, "Wait, this is wrong," and then backtracking: I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. It would be a lot better if you identified the problems before you announced them. It would be better if you figured out the seniors prescription problem before you announced it. Hopefully, with bills like this, you will actually travel and take the time to do it right.

One thing I have to put on the record with this bill is that most people don't—and I don't blame them for this. People don't really think about the difference between the levels of government; they don't. As we're talking about changing the finance rules for the provincial sector—and we certainly have our disagreements on how the government is proceeding with that. This bill, throwing it into the mix as an issue, muddies the waters. Now, whether that's intentional or not, I don't know, but it does.

The average person out there does not really—when people come to my office and they want something fixed,

they really don't care if it's municipal, provincial or federal. They have a problem; they want it fixed, right? So when you throw this bill in the mix, as that other stuff is floating around, it's going to muddy the waters. Whether it's intentional or not, I don't know. Why I wonder if it could be intentional is—well, look at some budgets. Beer in grocery stores; sell Ontario Hydro. Beer in grocery stores—oh, by the way. Was that intentional? I don't know. I really don't know, but it's the same type of issue.

We've got election finance issues provincially, and we're going to muddy the waters by throwing this in: "See all the good things we're doing municipally." The people outside are not going to recognize the difference. If that's intentional, it's truly scary, and I hope the government will take that very seriously.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I can assure the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane that, no, it wasn't intentional. But I do want to say that I totally agree with him that people don't care. People don't care who takes care of what. They've just got a problem.

One of the things I advertise is, "If you have a problem, you've got a question, just call." It doesn't matter what it is. We all have to work together and people just need to be served.

I have to respond to something from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. There was something called the Fewer Politicians Act. Not many of you were here, but there were a few on the other side who were here when that happened. I'm not sure if that would fit into his description of unilateral or undemocratic. It was voted on here, which is part of our democratic process. Thirty of us were just gone.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thirty-one.

Mr. John Fraser: Thirty-one?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thirty-one.

Mr. John Fraser: Thanks for helping me lose track. My train of thought has left the station.

I just wanted to remind him of that. As I said to him earlier, I firmly believe that municipalities are mature levels of government, and I think that this bill is an important bill.

In reference to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane's remarks with regard to travelling the bill, I think we have to recognize how, when we get into committee, we can make the bill better and recognize those things because that's really important, and, in a timely fashion, make sure that we get this legislation passed, as amended, so that it can actually be used in the next municipal cycle.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on my NDP colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I think that he always brings a reasoned argument to the legislative debate, and I very much appreciate that. It allows these

two-minute hits to be that much easier because we stay on focus.

1750

The first thing is the discussion about volunteer firefighters. In my own community, there is a very similar situation. The vast majority of fire protection/suppression occurs through the use of volunteer firefighters. I think it would be a terrible shame if these volunteers—these leaders in our communities—were basically shut out from running for public office, simply because there's an arbitrary rule of a three-month ban. I have issues with that, as well.

I have been elected since 2007. For those of you who were around during the 2007 general election, you will recall that there was a referendum. We had a very public debate and discussion about changes to the electoral system, and the public spoke. I think that call for referendum, that need to make sure that people are hearing all of the debates—pro and con; for and against—needs to happen when you're making these kind of fundamental changes to how we elect our municipal representatives.

I do have concerns that, again, this bill would allow that to proceed without that very important step. To me, that's probably the biggest concern that I have with this piece of legislation. There is an arbitrariness to sitting politicians, who, by their very nature, are going to make it easier for themselves, not for people who are seeking additional office.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise and congratulate the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for the insights that he provided into Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

I have to say that I may be an anomaly in this Legislature—certainly, different from the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane—because my community of London actually passed a municipal resolution supporting the right of municipalities to use a ranked ballot in the next municipal election. So they welcomed that provision of the bill.

The unfortunate thing is that they have not had an opportunity to comment on the other sections of the bill that really raise concerns. We have heard from stakeholder organizations and from legal experts that there is a possibility that the provisions of the bill that deal with third-party advertising and restrictions on third-party advertising could have the potential of silencing individuals, NGOs, charities and community organizations who want to express an opinion on an issue that they are concerned about during the municipal campaign period. We will need to do a lot more analysis and research to understand the implications of those provisions.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and others in this House have talked about the danger of rushing through legislation when you have a majority Parliament. I myself responded to Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act. I brought in 32 amendments; not a single amendment passed. We know that when the Liberals bring in this legislation, however

flawed it is, with their majority representation, they will just pass it, and that is a loss for democracy in this province.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm pleased to enter the debate again this afternoon. We began a couple of hours ago, and I led off with the government side, chatting about Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

I do want to respond to comments that were made by my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane when he said that there was a lack of consultation on this. Is he aware that over 3,400 submissions were received on this very issue? We listened to the public, to municipal councils and to their staff across the province. This took place last year, and we heard a lot of feedback on this.

In fact, I reached out to municipal politicians in my riding of Kitchener Centre. I was interested in knowing what my mayor, Berry Vrbanovic, had to say, as well as our regional chair—we have two levels of government there—Ken Seiling. He's the chair in Waterloo region. They both told me that they very much support many of the proposals that are in Bill 181. In particular, they are looking at shortening the election period—rather than having to start on January 1, moving it to May 1. They're looking forward to a shorter campaign period, and I can't say that I blame them. That came from Berry Vrbanovic. Ken Seiling, our chair, also believes that a shortened election period is a great idea. I contacted them myself and I listened to them, and I'm happy to share that information with you, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Reach out to your local municipal politicians and find out what they think, if you haven't already.

Another issue that they're very concerned about is the low voter turnout in local elections. By looking at some of the changes that we are suggesting, in particular with ranked ballots—this is another way of encouraging more people to vote. This is also favoured by my regional chair and by the mayor in my community.

They are very supportive of many of the other items that we are talking about. Accessibility, voters lists, campaign finances: They're in favour of those changes.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa South, the member from Dufferin–Caledon, my colleague from London West, and the member from Kitchener Centre.

In response to the member from Kitchener Centre: I didn't criticize the consultation that went on before. What I'm saying is, if you want true consultation on something like this, people have to be able to see what's being proposed, and then they can have an educated discussion on what is being proposed, and then you could make amendments that would make the bill better. But that hasn't been the practice of this government, as far I've seen, because amendment after amendment is wiped out, rejected summarily without discussion—just bang, bang, bang. That's how committee goes: bang, bang, bang. Well, that's not really how good legislation is made.

They're a majority government. They have won the right to govern, but they should have won the right to govern responsibly, and that is what's being missed. If they were truly governing responsibly, at this point they wouldn't have to do all this backtracking; people wouldn't have to get so upset about demonstration schools. Hopefully, the government will realize it with autism and grandfather these people—because you don't get rid of the list by just throwing the people off and saying, "Oh, the list is gone." That's not how it works. Change how you do things—that's fine—but the people who are stuck in the middle should be grandfathered. You can't just eliminate them. That shows that the government hasn't really realized how to govern responsibly.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being three minutes to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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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	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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
McDonnell, 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
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
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
Oraziotti, 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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
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
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahan, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahan, Monte McNaughton
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
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**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
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Ontario trails

Mr. Han Dong	8624
Hon. Michael Coteau	8624

Horse racing industry

Ms. Laurie Scott	8624
Hon. Jeff Leal	8625

Social assistance

Mr. Paul Miller	8625
Hon. Helena Jaczek	8625

School safety

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	8626
Hon. Liz Sandals	8626

Infectious disease control

Mr. Toby Barrett	8626
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8627

Visitor

Miss Monique Taylor	8627
---------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016, Bill 173, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2016 favorisant la création d'emplois pour aujourd'hui et demain (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 173, M. Sousa

Third reading agreed to	8627
-------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8627
----------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Hemophilia

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8627
----------------------	------

Social assistance

Mr. Paul Miller	8628
-----------------------	------

Vaisakhi

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar	8628
------------------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mr. Victor Fedeli	8628
-------------------------	------

Student assistance

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8629
-------------------------	------

East York Skating Club

Mr. Arthur Potts	8629
------------------------	------

Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

Ms. Sylvia Jones	8629
------------------------	------

World Lebanese Cultural Union

Mr. John Fraser	8629
-----------------------	------

2016 Equity Conference

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	8630
-------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	8630
Report adopted	8630

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care funding

Mrs. Gila Martow	8630
------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8630
-------------------------	------

Special-needs students

Mr. Todd Smith	8630
----------------------	------

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Ms. Jennifer K. French	8631
------------------------------	------

Special-needs students

Mrs. Gila Martow	8631
------------------------	------

Autism treatment

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8631
-------------------------	------

Personal support workers

Mr. Jim McDonell	8632
------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mme France Gélinas	8632
--------------------------	------

Child care

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	8632
--------------------------------	------

Health care funding

Ms. Sylvia Jones	8632
------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mme France Gélinas	8633
--------------------------	------

Special-needs students

Mr. Jim McDonell	8633
------------------------	------

Health care funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8633
-------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, Bill 181, Mr. McMeekin / Loi de 2016 sur la modernisation des élections municipales, projet de loi 181, M. McMeekin

Ms. Daiene Vernile	8633
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8634
Mr. Chris Ballard	8635

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	8636
Mr. Randy Hillier	8636
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8637
Hon. Reza Moridi	8637
Mrs. Gila Martow	8637
Mr. Chris Ballard.....	8638
Mr. Rick Nicholls	8638
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8641
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	8641
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	8641
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8642
Mr. Rick Nicholls	8642
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8642
Hon. Steven Del Duca	8645
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8646
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8646
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	8646
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8647
Mr. Todd Smith	8647
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8650
Hon. Jeff Leal	8650
Mr. Randy Hillier	8651
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8651
Mr. Todd Smith	8651
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8651
Mr. John Fraser.....	8653
Ms. Sylvia Jones	8653
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8653
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	8654
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8654
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	8654

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 13 April 2016 / Mercredi 13 avril 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2016, Bill 100, Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2016 sur le soutien aux sentiers de l'Ontario, projet de loi 100, M. Coteau

Mr. Randy Hillier	8605
Mr. Peter Tabuns	8606
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8606
Mr. Jim McDonell	8606
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8607
Mr. Randy Hillier	8607
Mr. Taras Natyshak	8607
Mr. Mike Colle	8609
Mr. John Yakabuski	8609
Miss Monique Taylor	8609
Mr. Yvan Baker	8610
Mr. Taras Natyshak	8610
Mr. Norm Miller	8610
Mr. Peter Tabuns	8612
Mr. Arthur Potts	8612
Ms. Sylvia Jones	8613
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8613
Mr. Norm Miller	8613
Mr. Todd Smith	8613
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	8615

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8615
Hon. Helena Jaczek	8615
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8615
Mr. Robert Bailey	8615
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8615
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	8615
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8615
Mr. Paul Miller	8615
Hon. Michael Gravelle	8616
Ms. Laurie Scott	8616
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8616
Hon. Michael Coteau	8616
Mr. John Yakabuski	8616
Mr. Wayne Gates	8616
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8616
Mr. Michael Harris	8616
Mr. Taras Natyshak	8616
Hon. James J. Bradley	8616

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8616
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8616
Hon. Reza Moridi	8616
Mr. Jim Wilson	8616
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	8616
Mr. Granville Anderson	8616
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8616
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8616

Correction of record

Mr. Randy Hillier	8616
-------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Correctional services

Mr. Patrick Brown	8616
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8617
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8617

Lobbyists

Mr. Patrick Brown	8617
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8618
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8618

Correctional services

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8619
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8619
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8619

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8620
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8620
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8620

Correctional services

Mr. Rick Nicholls	8620
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8621

Fundraising

Ms. Catherine Fife	8621
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8621

Child care

Mrs. Laura Albanese	8622
Hon. Liz Sandals	8622

Wind turbines

Mr. Jim Wilson	8622
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8622

Hospital funding

Mme France Gélinas	8623
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8623

Continued on inside back cover