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Thursday 27 October 2016

Jeudi 27 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 octobre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning, and a special good morning to Ms. Deller. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PATIENTS FIRST ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT
LA PRIORITÉ AUX PATIENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant diverses lois dans l'intérêt des soins axés sur les patients.

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

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me.

This morning we're talking about the Patients First Act, and I want to start by saying that our government is committed to building a better Ontario by putting patients at the centre of a truly integrated health system.

The Patients First Act is seen as the first step towards creating a health system that represents the unique needs of all Ontarians. This legislation, as we have heard, if passed, would give Ontario's 14 local health integration networks, or so-called LHINs, an expanded role, connecting all parts of the health care system, including primary care and home and community care, to improve planning and delivery of front-line services for patients.

The Patients First Act will establish formal relations between the LHINs and local boards of health to support integrated health services planning. Our government is committed to strengthening our health care system for everyone by doing this. We are committed to allowing for easier and more equitable access to care by expanding access to home and community care, and ensuring that every Ontarian has access to a primary care provider.

This is very important. Here in my community, there's always a greater need of home and community care as our population ages. The fact that we would be concentrating specifically on this I think will help many, many people.

As I said, as a government we are committed to continuing to work with our indigenous partners on strength-

ening indigenous voices in system planning and services that are provided to their communities. We will continue to collaborate with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban aboriginal organizations in this process.

We are also committed to ensuring the involvement of francophone Ontarians in the planning, design and delivery of health programs and services. This legislation specifically recognizes the importance of French-language services, and we are committed to providing more equitable care for the francophone community that lives in Ontario.

This act plans to transform health care and specifically act in the areas that need more attention at the moment. We have made progress in many areas, including increasing access, connecting services, informing patients and protecting our health care system as a whole, but there can be more that can be done to put patients first.

Better care for patients means that we need to make some changes. Our plan for Patients First includes priority initiatives that we know are important to our constituents, including expanding access, as I mentioned, to home and community care and ensuring that every Ontarian has a primary care provider.

These proposed legislative changes reflect our vision for creating a truly integrated system that will facilitate local health care planning to ensure that patients receive more equitable access—that's very important—and establish these formal links between the LHINs and the local boards of health. More importantly, it ensures that patients' voices are at the heart of a system that is accountable to patients and connects them with the health care they need.

I know that there have been some privacy concerns that have been mentioned in regard to this bill. I want to emphasize that the LHINs would not be authorized to access the personal health information of patients from physicians' offices. Patients deserve to know that their most sensitive information is not being accessed inappropriately and that their privacy is being protected.

This is why we have introduced the Health Information Protection Act, which puts patients first by improving privacy, accountability and transparency in our health care system.

Our government actively consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner on this legislation, and he has been supportive throughout the process. That is something that is important for people who are watching us to know.

It's also important to note that any privacy protection processes and procedures would also be subject to the

Information and Privacy Commissioner's regular and on-going oversight, review and approval.

We remain committed to building on Ontario's position as a leader in health information and privacy protection and will continue to give our health care system the necessary tools to protect the private health information of patients in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as you know, over the past decade, Ontario's health care system has improved significantly. We have reduced wait times for surgery and increased the number of Ontarians who have a primary health care provider. We have expanded services at home and in their communities.

Since 2003, the number of physicians in Ontario has increased by over 26%—5,600 physicians—and 94% of Ontarians now have access to a family health care provider. More than 95% of patients waiting for an urgent cardiac procedure received care within the recommended times. Now there are over 26,300 more nurses working in nursing in Ontario since we took office in 2003. This includes over 11,000 more RNs, registered nurses.

Our family health teams are now serving over 200 communities. I have two family health teams in my riding of York South–Weston, and they are working really well for patients. I should say that I also am served by a family health team, and I find that the care is really attentive to the needs of the patients.

0910

These are the types of improvements that we've been trying to make through the years, Madam Speaker. That doesn't mean that our work should stop here. We need to put the patients as the focus of our health care system, and it has to be done in an appropriate manner. I think that through Bill 41, the Patients First Act, we would solve a lot of the issues that still need to be solved. As I said, this will establish formal relations between LHINs and local boards of health to support an integrated system, an integrated health service planning.

We have allowed debate to continue here in the House when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill, so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views in regard to the bill. The bill has seen over nine hours of debate overall, and many of my legislative colleagues, including myself at this point, have had the opportunity to speak to this bill. There has been considerable debate, and we've heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives.

Unfortunately, much of the debate has been repeating points that have already been made by other members. I believe that it's time that we put the bill to a vote for second reading and, hopefully, refer it to committee, where the important work takes place, as you know, where we can make changes in regard to what we've heard here in the chamber.

In committee, members of all parties will hear from stakeholders that have an interest in the bill. Members of the public would be able to provide their important input to the bill. We would have the opportunity, as members,

to move amendments to strengthen the bill. And this House can move on to debate other matters.

There are other important pieces of legislation before the House that were introduced by the government. I will name a few: Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act; Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act; and Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker, we would like to spend the time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we can't do that until Bill 41 is referred to committee for further review.

As a result, I move that this question be now put.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: On a point of order: I was prepared to speak to Bill 41 this morning. I've not had a chance to speak to first reading yet, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): That's not a point of order; I'm very sorry.

Ms. Albanese has moved that the question be now put. Given that I heard that there were 27 speakers, five days and over nine hours of debate, I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. A recorded vote will be required. This vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 45, a very important bill. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough South-west.

Good morning to all my colleagues as we start debate on a very important bill that ensures that we engage more

people in our democratic process. This bill, if passed, would make it easier to vote and engage more people in the democratic process, especially our youth. I'll be, as I mentioned, sharing my time with the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Voting gives us all a voice in the political process. It is through voting that the people give their representatives and their governments the legitimacy to lead, and hold those representatives and governments to account. It allows people to have a direct impact on what the government does and where it should be going.

Speaker, I will confess that I'm a big fan of voting. I love to vote. Since I became a Canadian citizen—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I've never experienced heckling right from the floor of the House, Speaker, especially from my esteemed, good, close friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who can basically heckle from his apartment and we can still hear him because he's got that great voice.

As I was saying, Speaker, I'm a big fan of voting. I think everybody should vote. As the saying goes in our business: Vote early, vote often.

Interjections.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, by voting often I mean, make sure you don't miss an election, ever, to vote. That's what I mean by voting often. I just want to make that very clear.

I think this is an important debate—and especially I'm thinking of the pages who are sitting here, who not too many years from now will be voting and hopefully running as 19-year-olds, because that's very much possible, as well.

I became a Canadian citizen in 1992, and that's where my voting journey begins. I very, very vividly remember the first time I voted. I hope everybody does remember when they voted for the first time. I hope these pages will remember when they get the chance to vote for the first time. But in my instance, I'll never forget when I voted for the first time, in 1992, when I became a Canadian citizen, for a couple of reasons. Number one: the journey that my parents had made as immigrants to Canada, coming from a country where they did not have a right to vote, where my father had spent nine months as a political prisoner exactly for that purpose, because he led a pro-democracy march so that people can have the right to vote. Here in my adopted country, after living in Canada for only roughly four years by that time, and becoming a Canadian citizen, I, as an equal citizen, now had the right to vote. That alone was a really moving experience for me. But my first vote, in 1992, was not in any general election or by-election; it was not in a federal, municipal or provincial election.

Speaker, you may remember that in 1992 we had a referendum in Canada on the Charlottetown accord, on proposed constitutional changes so that Quebec could be brought into our Constitution. That was my first vote. The significance of being a 19-year-old, I believe, at that

time, having only lived in Canada roughly four years, having just become a Canadian citizen, and being able to vote for the very first time in my life, and to vote on the future of my country in terms of the constitutional certainty that proposal had put forward, was overwhelming. It's something that I, to this day, find incredible: that that vote gave me, as a citizen, as a Canadian, such incredible power in deciding what my future should look like.

Now, as we know, that proposal did not pass. Again, the will of the people prevailed as they saw best. But that opportunity left a lasting impression on me, and a commitment and determination that I will never miss a vote. So when I say vote early, I go to an advance poll; and vote often, that is, don't miss any vote. I've lived by those rules and I have made sure that, be it an election for school board trustee or our municipal council or my MPP or my member of Parliament, I've never missed an opportunity to vote.

0920

More and more I vote during advance polls because there are no lineups. It's easy. I like to take my children to vote, so they can see how voting takes place. Although I do miss voting on the day of the election, because there is certain nostalgia about that, when your fellow citizens are all lined up together—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You can still go. Go watch.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, it's kind of difficult, being an MPP now—the watching part—you're not allowed to campaign.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Get the vote out.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes.

Voting is such an amazing experience. It has been very personal. Every time I go vote and I'm in that little booth putting down my X, I go back to 1992. It happens to me every single time. I go back, thinking about the very first time I did this. At that time, my hands were shaking when I was doing it, because it was such a moving experience.

Speaker, what's troubling for me, though, is that as we think about our democracy and the strength of our democracy and we think about how integral voting is and how powerful people are when they exercise their right to vote, what's troubling is that we continue to see lower voter turnout. We continue seeing fewer Canadians and fewer Ontarians exercise their incredible democratic right, while there are people in other parts of the world, as we speak, protesting, marching, maybe even getting shot at or bombed at depending on which part of the world you may be thinking about, because they want those democratic institutions, because they do want that right to vote. For us to have that and have such a peaceful way of being able to exercise our power as citizens and not being able to use that power as citizens is really challenging.

The challenge that we are facing is real when it comes to voter turnout. For example, in the last general election in Ontario in 2014, less than 52% of people came out to

vote—less than 52%. That should not be news to anyone. It's something that should concern us all.

We've been seeing this trend going back for many years. Until 2014, voter turnout had declined in every provincial election since 1990. When it comes to young people, the numbers are even worse. In the last provincial election, only 34% of youth cast a ballot—only 34%, and this is a real problem.

Voting isn't just important for people who want to have their voices heard in the government and the representatives they elect to speak on their behalf and bring forward different points of view and perspectives in Legislatures like ours. It's imperative that their diverse interests are represented by people they elect. Voting gives us our mandate to legislate and to govern, a mandate to manage our province's precious resources, to make decisions on behalf of the people who elected us.

That's why, as the elected officials for our communities, I believe that it is our job to promote civic engagement. I know all members in this House and other elected representatives at different levels take that responsibility very seriously. In doing so, by engaging people in civic engagement, we enable and encourage Ontarians to participate in their democracy. That is exactly what this legislation, if passed, would attempt to do.

Speaker, as we seek to address the issue of low voter turnout, I think the first question to ask is, "Why don't people vote?" There could be any number of reasons why an individual chooses not to vote. But in general, issues of knowledge and awareness can prevent people from voting. When you break down the steps, a lot of information goes into each vote that gets cast in our province. People need to know that there is an election. I think many of us will know the stories. When we go knock on doors and we say, "Hi, there's an election," I think people are surprised: "Oh, there's an election happening." They have to know enough about their options to develop a preference. They have to know when to vote, where to vote and what to bring when they get there. If we are failing to communicate any of these points to somebody, they are that much less likely to show up at the poll on election day.

Looking at the results of the survey conducted by Elections Ontario after the 2014 election is a sobering reminder of how much work needs to be done in this particular area. There is surprisingly low awareness of some important information about voting, especially when it comes to our youth.

Less than one third of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 knew what the ID requirements are to vote, and only a quarter of them were aware of their advance polling options. Only 36% of youth recalled receiving a notice of registration card, which is one of the main ways that people learn where and when to vote. Even worse, more than half of them were under the false impression that they needed one of these cards to vote. Elections Ontario's survey also found that only 42% of young

people recalled seeing an Elections Ontario television ad, and even fewer recalled seeing a print ad.

Of course, reaching youth is a challenge. It's always a challenge, trying to make sure that we're targeting the right medium that youth are engaged in. But that is not an excuse for inaction, and we can and must do better to ensure that we increase their knowledge and awareness and engage more people to come out and vote, especially our young people.

Right before I introduced this bill, I visited Harbord Collegiate Institute, a high school just down the street from Queen's Park. I had the pleasure of talking to a grade 10 or 11 class, I believe it was, about this bill. We talked about voting and about our democracy in general—a very engaged group of young people, very thoughtful about things. There were a couple of kids in the class who were thinking of running for school council. You could see the seeds already sort of growing.

It was an inspiring discussion. They were informed, critical, intelligent future electors. They are definitely the next generation of our democracy, and they want to be engaged. Now, of course, Speaker, it's our job to make sure that they have the information and the tools they need.

So, where to start? How do we engage these voters and reverse the trend of voter apathy and low turnout? Speaker, I'm pleased to say that this work is already under way and reflected in Bill 45.

Much of the progress we have already made in this regard is thanks to the tireless work of our Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, and his team at Elections Ontario. It is the Chief Electoral Officer's job to independently administer Ontario's elections in a non-partisan, transparent and accountable way. This includes pretty much every part of the election process: registering voters; finding locations for polling stations; communicating with the public; hiring and training election staff; ensuring the integrity of the election by making sure rules are followed; and counting results when it's all over. It's a big job, and I'm sure everybody will agree that it's an incredibly important job.

After every election, the Chief Electoral Officer talks to people across the province and assesses how his organization did and how things could have gone better. Finally, he publishes a report and includes any recommendations he has for the government about how Ontario's election system could do a better job serving its people.

In drafting this bill that we're discussing today, our government considered four separate reports from the Chief Electoral Officer: his two most recent annual reports, his report on the 2014 general election and his report on the Whitby–Oshawa by-election earlier this year. We looked at each recommendation, and from them we have put together legislation that I'm excited to tell you a little bit about today. It includes provisions, both large and small, that would make voting easier and promote democratic participation in Ontario.

0930

With this bill, we hope to start confronting right away these challenges that I was speaking of earlier. All of the measures that are being proposed here would be in place for our next election in 2018, if the bill is passed through this legislation.

Speaker, I'd like now to address a few of the key provisions in the legislation that I'm most excited about. The first measure I want to talk to you about is a provisional voter registration for young people. Earlier, I mentioned my visit to Harbord Collegiate and my conversation with a group of young people who were passionate about our province's future, curious about how decisions get made, and motivated to make sure that Ontario's moving in the right direction.

As you can imagine, they were really interested in how marijuana will be legalized in Ontario. They definitely asked me questions about that, so it was interesting. I got to ask them what the age limit should be. I won't tell you what they told me.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Too young, I thought. I told them it was too young, the age they were proposing.

We want to harness that sense of opportunity and enthusiasm in young people and get them invested in the democratic process early on. If passed, this bill would require the Chief Electoral Officer to create a provisional voter registry which 16- and 17-year-old future eligible voters could join before they reach the voting age. Once they turn 18 and are of legal age to vote, their information will be automatically transferred to the permanent register of electors.

I believe that this move would have several positive effects. First, I think it would increase the number of young eligible voters who are registered as voters. They're currently the least likely of any age group to be registered. This gives us an opportunity early on to get them engaged, to get them signed on.

This is important because being registered ensures that Elections Ontario knows where to contact you and how to give you important information about upcoming elections. There's an engagement piece that is integral to this. It also makes the voting process even simpler for you on election day. This change would also give Elections Ontario more opportunity to reach out to young people before they reach the voting age, and give those youth a concrete action they could take in response, which is to just sign up.

Elections Ontario has a very important mandate, as do other organizations, like Student Vote etc., to engage with young people, to talk about democracy, to talk about elections and the student vote—I think we all participate, come election time—where they'll go into schools and do mock elections and do voting. All of those are very important exercises, and I think we need to do more of them.

But they do have an aura of “not real.” I mean, they're make-believe. They're tagged onto a real election. They're encouraging young people to follow elections.

I've participated in mock elections. Young people will come, and either they're doing grade 5 civics or grade 10. They want your lawn signs, they want your pamphlets, because they are being you, and somebody else is doing it for another candidate in the riding. It's exciting to talk to them about it.

But it's—what's the word I'm looking for? It's an imitation, so to speak. It's trying to sort of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Simulate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Simulate. Thank you. That's the word. Thank you. My good friend from Renfrew comes in handy all the time. Simulate.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think this is a very important issue. This is probably one of the most important issues that we'll discuss, to the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Speaker, those are simulations. But in terms of a real election, where you can engage 16- and 17-year-olds to actually sign on to the voters list, a provisional voter list, that will then transfer to the permanent voter list, I think it's concrete. It's real. It's a real, meaningful engagement point when it comes to engaging our young people. I think it offers an incredible opportunity to engage in conversation with our 16- and 17-year-olds when they're contemplating deliberating on that decision to sign up on the provisional voter list.

When the Chief Electoral Officer recommended this measure, he expressed an interest in working more with high schools to promote education and awareness, among other initiatives. I welcome his efforts and look forward to seeing what he and his team come up with once this bill passes and that power, that authority, is given to him through legislation.

To be absolutely clear, Speaker, this change would not change the legal voting age in Ontario. That will remain at 18 years of age. We're simply looking to empower Ontarians at an early age to participate in their democratic process.

This is probably the most exciting part for me, personally, about this bill. There are some other important pieces that I will speak to now, but I think this piece about engaging young people and getting them on the voter list from 16 onwards is really exciting.

I know the pages will be the first ones to sign on as soon as they turn 16. They're not even nodding, because they're not allowed to nod or acknowledge members as we're speaking. I'm testing them right now. They're passing.

Speaker, with this bill, we are also proposing to make it easier for people to access the polls by moving the scheduled election date from fall to spring. That's another big aspect of this bill. The proposed date for scheduled elections is the first Thursday in June, which means that our next provincial election, if the bill passes, would take place on June 7, 2018.

This would mean longer daylight hours on election day than on our current fixed election date, which is the first Thursday in October, which would encourage voters to get to the polls. Longer daylight hours would also be

helpful for candidates and canvassers, who often work into the evenings to knock on doors and interact with our constituents.

The new date is chosen at a time when children are still in school, the weather is generally warmer and most Ontarians haven't yet left for their summer vacations. It also has the advantage of avoiding conflict with Ontario's scheduled municipal election date, which comes at the end of October. As you can imagine, two elections at the same time could cause confusion and definitely a lot of lawn signs across our towns and cities and different municipalities.

This change is among those that were recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer in his most recent annual report. I think that a spring election makes sense for Ontario, and our hope is that by making it more convenient for people to get to their polling stations, we will help get more people out to vote as well.

Madam Speaker, the third measure I want to highlight for the members today is a proposal to allow Elections Ontario to better integrate technology into our existing election processes.

This is a badly needed step. It really amazes me that in 2016, we are still counting ballots by hand. The bill would allow for the use of electronic vote tabulators, machines that can quickly and accurately count paper ballots after an election.

Mr. James J. Bradley: As long as they can't be hacked.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I am sure that there are technologies in place, to the member from St. Catharines, such that they won't be hacked. They are self-contained units, I believe.

Speaker, along with e-poll books, or electronic voter strike-off lists, this enables what the Chief Electoral Officer refers to in his report as a "technology-enabled staffing model." This modern approach would mean that Elections Ontario's polling locations could now run more smoothly and efficiently on Election Day. We anticipate this will provide a faster and more convenient experience for voters.

This model was piloted earlier this year during the Whitby-Oshawa by-election. Its results are documented in the Chief Electoral Officer's report following that by-election, in which he stated that the pilot was an "overwhelming success." Speaker, let's build on that success.

While we are on the topic of modernization, I do want to address one misconception that seems to have made its way out there. It has to do with the idea of online voting. While it's an exciting idea, this is not something that the Chief Electoral Officer has recommended, given the current technology that is available. Between 2010 and 2012, the Chief Electoral Officer studied options for Internet voting of various sorts and found that none of the options currently available would sufficiently protect the integrity of our voting process. He also noted that there is not yet conclusive evidence linking online voting to increased voter turnout.

In my mind, the Chief Electoral Officer's words of caution here really capture the approach of modernization that our government has taken with the measures in this bill. We are excited about modernizing the election system and we want to give voters more options. But this progress can't come at the expense of the principles that ground our system as it currently exists.

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We will always be looking to implement changes that prioritize the integrity and fairness of our elections and protect our voters' privacy. With this measure and this bill, we believe we have done just that.

Speaker, modernization in this bill isn't limited to new technologies. We are also looking to update the rules around time-tested campaign activities, which are very important to engage constituents during an election.

In the lead-up to an election, canvassing is a crucial part of getting voters engaged. However closely potential voters follow an election race, canvassing is often the only opportunity they'll have to meet their candidates face to face. This opportunity to personally discuss and ask questions of a candidate can make all the difference in helping someone decide how to vote or even whether or not to vote.

If passed, this legislation would help ensure that people living in apartment buildings and condominiums are not being excluded from this opportunity. Although the law already states that canvassers have the right to access apartment buildings and condominiums, in practice it's not always that easy. Our bill would clarify the existing rules and let the Chief Electoral Officer enforce this right by issuing fines to building owners and condominium corporations that deny canvassers access to these buildings. To help address any residents' concerns about privacy under these rules, it will also introduce set hours when the right to access these buildings would apply. This is a measure that grows more and more important as these kinds of residences become increasingly common in urban areas in particular across our province.

This is a wide-reaching bill, with other measures ranging from updated rules and processes for parties and candidates, to introducing new ways to protect voter privacy. As I mentioned earlier, the member from Scarborough Southwest will walk you through these in some more detail. In the meantime, Speaker, there is one more component of this bill that I'd like to highlight.

Last year, our government passed legislation which aligned the electoral boundaries in southern Ontario to match those at the federal level. This improved representation across the province, increasing the number of southern ridings from 96 to 111. These boundaries will be in place for the scheduled 2018 election. We also maintained an additional 11 ridings in the north, compared to the 10 northern federal ridings, to help ensure fair and adequate representation in that important part of our province.

This bill continues with that effort, again focusing on the unique needs of the north. We recognize that these sorts of changes must be made carefully, with special

attention paid to factors such as its large geographic size, its low population density and the distinct needs of its indigenous communities. We want to make sure that the changes we make will directly reflect the priorities and needs of the people living in the affected areas.

That's why this bill would enable the creation of a Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. This commission would be tasked with only looking at the electoral boundaries in Ontario's two northernmost districts, Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. To ensure fair representation and local perspectives, this committee would include members from that part of the province. It would consider the factors I've listed, and more, and develop recommendations for the creation of either one or two additional ridings in this geographic space. Our government would then introduce legislation to implement these recommendations in time for the 2018 provincial election.

So far, I have covered just a few of the measures that our government is putting forward in this bill. In just a few moments, you will be hearing about more of the details of the provisions.

One of the reasons I'm proud of this bill is the range and scope of issues it addresses. While we certainly have some significant measures in this bill to improve and transform Ontario's election system, we also recognize the power that many small changes can have in improving something much larger.

I am also very proud to be acting on the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer. We look forward to his recommendations in the future as he continues to steadily guide our election system in a progressive direction.

Most of all, should this bill pass, I look forward to seeing the beginnings of its effects in our upcoming provincial election. By making voting easier and encouraging more people, particularly our youth, to get involved in our democratic process, we will make our province more representative of its citizens and build an even stronger Ontario.

Speaker, thank you very much for your time.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you to the Attorney General. Every time he speaks, I learn something new. When he mentioned the fact that in his country he couldn't vote, it reminds me of other countries where you can't vote either and the luxury we have here in this country. We sort of take it for granted that voting is something that the whole world does, but it's not the case.

Anyway, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to continue to debate on a bill that seeks to improve our election system, engage our electorate and give us stronger, more representative democracy. I'm very proud to be involved in this bill and I hope that many of you already share my enthusiasm.

As you know, the members have just heard that Bill 45 seeks to engage more Ontarians in our democracy. It proposes new ways to reach out to people across the

province, especially young people, and it takes steps to update our technology by introducing modern technologies and addressing modern concerns like voter privacy.

I'd like now to take this opportunity to delve a little deeper into the measures the Attorney General has just taken us through, as well as a few that he didn't go through, and provide a little more context, rationale and clarification wherever I can.

The first amendment I want to discuss is our government's proposal to make it possible for 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote. Like my colleague, I'm very excited about this item. Creating a provisional register would help to get future voters excited from a young age about their right to vote. In the long run, I believe this could increase voter turnout for years to come. By engaging young people earlier on, our hope is that they would form habits of democratic participation that would last for the rest of their lives. I'm very excited about this measure, and I'd like to explain how these measures would work and address some potential questions.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I want to address the question of how the new provisional register will work. Much like the permanent register of electors for Ontario, which is our existing register of eligible voters, the new provisional register will be run by Elections Ontario. The specifics of how this register will be set up and maintained will be largely left to the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer, as the authority on elections in our province. We are confident that he would develop an effective and user-friendly way for young people to add their information to this register.

Fortunately, we can also learn from the efforts of our neighbours in Quebec and in Nova Scotia. Both of these provinces already have provisional registration for 16- and 17-year-olds. Our Chief Electoral Officer works closely with his counterparts in other jurisdictions across Canada and will draw from their experiences and best practices in his own work.

Of course, as any application where we store and maintain personal information, we have to ensure that we are taking every precaution when it comes to protecting privacy, even more so when we're talking about young people's information. We want to be sure that protecting the privacy of the individuals on this register is prioritized throughout its development and implementation.

That's why there are also a number of provisions of this legislation that very clearly set out the parameters for the new register. That means young people will only be included on this register if they sign up. Once they're signed up, they'll be able to remove their names from the provisional register at any time. Both of these processes will require proof of identification, and that will have to be done by the young person themselves. This means, for example, that parents can't register children on their own behalf.

This legislation is also very specific about how the information on the provisional register can be used by Elections Ontario. One use, of course, is to transfer a

person's information to the permanent register when that person turns 18. Aside from that, the information on the provisional register can only be used by the Chief Electoral Officer for educational outreach.

The provisional register will also be subject to Elections Ontario's existing privacy policy, which governs its handling of all personal information and also outlines mandatory training for all staff. Between all these precautions and our Chief Electoral Officer's good judgment, I feel confident our young people's information will be treated with the utmost care.

Madam Speaker, although my colleague already covered it in some detail, I would also like to say a few words about the new spring election date, which will be the first Thursday in June. As the Attorney General mentioned, there are some important advantages to having an election at that time of year; namely, longer daylight hours, warmer weather and avoiding municipal election season. But there are some other benefits as well. Other than these considerations, the schedules of many people in rural parts of the province are also of concern. Since the new fixed date would fall just after the planting season, it is a convenient time for Ontarians in hunting and farming communities.

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Holding the election earlier in the year also has administrative advantages. For example, it means that candidates and parties filing required documents with Elections Ontario after the election can do so in the same calendar year as the election. Under the current system, this often takes place the following year.

On the subject of the new election date, I would also like to clarify one point: Changing the date does mean that we will be having an election four months sooner than previously planned. I know that many of my colleagues across the aisle are pretty excited about having an election sooner.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Really excited. We're jumping up and down.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, you read my mind.

However, this also means that it's important to pass all these measures in a timely manner so that we can give Elections Ontario enough time to implement them before the new election date. That's why our government is hoping to have our proposals, if passed, take effect by the beginning of next year.

The other thing about having a June election, besides daylight, is that, in my experience—I've run through so many elections since 1988 and they've all been done in October or November when it's cold. My first election was done on November 14. I remember the cold weather, the darkness after 5 o'clock and people unwilling to open their doors. Our last election, in June, was the exact opposite and I was able to canvass right until 9 o'clock and, on some days, until 9:30.

Modernization: I also want to talk about this bill and modernization. Modernization allows for the use of certain voting technology in provincial elections which will enable the Chief Electoral Officer to implement his

proposed technology-based staffing model. I would also like to briefly walk you through the model that was piloted for the Whitby–Oshawa by-election in February of this year. This should give you a sense of the impact it could have on Ontario elections when it's scaled up and implemented across the province.

Under the current system, finding a voter on the list and giving them their ballot is done manually. This requires the effort of both a poll clerk and a deputy returning officer. At the end of the day, votes are also counted by hand. As a result, Elections Ontario requires a lot of staff to conduct an election.

In the last election, in 2014, for example, approximately 76,000 temporary staff were required. By introducing technology to replace both of these functions, the Chief Electoral Officer estimates that Elections Ontario can reduce its staffing requirements by 41%. That's a huge decrease and a significant step toward improving the efficiency of our elections process. The new staff model and the process that was piloted under this model also provide a more streamlined and positive experience for voters. A whopping 96% of voters who were polled after voting with the technology-enabled model thought that the process was easy with the new technology; 91% were supportive of the technology being used in future elections.

Madam Speaker, the remarkable thing about this is how much value we're able to get out of two fairly straightforward technologies. One of these technologies, the e-poll book, replaces the many, many pages of names—and I'm talking about hard-copy pages here—that officials currently have to search through to find any given voter. Instead, they can just scan the voter's notice of registration card. The system will find the voter's name in a fraction of a second and print out their ballot. This saves everyone time and keeps everything running smoothly for elections officials.

The other tool that's used here is a vote tabulator, which quickly and accurately counts the paper ballots. In the by-election pilot, the Chief Electoral Officer reported that these machines performed "flawlessly." Votes at the pilot locations had been counted and results were posted on the Elections Ontario website within 30 minutes from the close of the polls. That's a third of the time it took polling locations operating under the current model.

The simplicity of these technologies, and the fact that they integrate seamlessly into a process that voters are already familiar with, means that introducing this new technology doesn't come at the expense of voter confidence. This is extremely important in elections. The system can only be as effective as the trust that people have in it.

The need to maintain public trust is also one of the reasons that the Chief Electoral Officer has not advised the government to go ahead with more expansive applications of technology in our elections system. That's why I'm so excited that this legislation proposes to enable changes that would make our elections faster and more

efficient, while maintaining the people's trust, both as voters and taxpayers.

Should this bill pass, we understand that the new staffing model would be implemented in the vast majority of polling locations across the province in the 2018 general election.

Another component of this bill that I expect we'll be hearing questions about involves the rules for candidates and canvassers around accessing apartment buildings, condos and other multiple-residence buildings. According to existing rules, candidates and their representatives already have the right to canvass these buildings. However, when they are faced with uncooperative landlords or condominium associations who won't give them access to the buildings, there is currently very little they can do about it. As the Attorney General already said, this is a problem.

Canvassing can be a valuable tool in keeping voters informed and engaged. For voters who only engage with elections through news media, it can be easy to feel removed from the decision-making process, even disenfranchised.

At the same time, one of the biggest challenges facing candidates, parties and elections officials alike is keeping voters' attention. In an era where politics is often met with cynicism and even indifference, we need to be encouraging a personal approach wherever possible.

That's why this bill proposes to give the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to enforce the rights of access for candidates and their representatives by imposing administrative penalties. The local returning officer would have the power to fine a building owner or condominium corporation if a canvasser at least 18 years of age or older was refused access to their building within 24 hours of it being requested. On election day, the 24-hour period would no longer apply, and access would have to be granted immediately.

We understand that the residents of these buildings might have concerns about canvassers being allowed into their building. They might be worried about their privacy, for example. As with other situations in which canvassers are going door to door, people have no obligation to speak with them. They can just keep their door shut. We want to be respectful of these concerns. I understand that Elections Ontario plans to do outreach to educate people about their rights and obligations regarding canvassing in affected buildings.

The legislation that we've proposed includes new measures to safeguard voter information. The Chief Electoral Officer already shares certain registered voter information with candidates to help guide their outreach activities during the election period. If passed, this bill would make this available to parties as well, recognizing that campaigns are often organized centrally. However, it would also require the Chief Electoral Officer to withhold voter information from parties, candidates and MPPs who don't provide an adequate privacy policy for handling this information.

While Elections Ontario already provides privacy guidelines for political actors, this measure would help ensure that everybody who has access to voter data meets appropriate privacy standards. As our province's electoral authority and a non-partisan official, we feel that the Chief Electoral Officer is the appropriate party to be setting these standards.

While many of the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations were significant in scope, other recommendations seek to streamline administrative processes. One such administrative measure would consolidate the registration process for candidates, turning what is currently a three-step process into one that can be managed by a single form.

This bill would also give the Chief Electoral Officer more discretion to reach out to voters in ways that make sense today, whether that's in a newspaper, online or through social media. These are the sorts of smaller steps that we hope will have a big impact in pushing our election system forward.

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Madam Speaker, I'd also like to use the time I have left to give a bit more detail about the proposed Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission that my colleague has already mentioned.

As the Attorney General explained, we want to be diligent and respectful in our decisions about any changes to electoral boundaries that may impact the communities in the north. We want to be sure that these changes will serve to make things better, not worse. That's why this commission is so important. The scope of its mandate will be fairly narrow, and that's by design. We're planning to add up to two new ridings in the northernmost parts of our province. We want to know how to do that in a way that is responsible, principled and will improve the state of representation in the region.

Although specific appointments would be made after legislation was enacted, this bill does outline the basic composition of the commission. It would be chaired by a current or former judge of an Ontario court, and would also include the Chief Electoral Officer and a member of an Ontario university.

Finally, it would also include two community representatives who identify themselves as indigenous persons. We felt it was very important to specifically include indigenous perspectives, both as a matter of practice and of principle. We hope that the indigenous communities in the area being reviewed by this commission will make their voices heard and help us to find electoral boundaries that work for them.

We're doing a lot to reach out and to make our system much more transparent, open and efficient. It's not in my speech, but I have to say one thing: Listening to our neighbours in the south, and the Republican candidate who talks about rigged elections, I look at our system and I think how much transparency there is in our system, and how difficult it would be to have a rigged election here in Ontario, I don't think anyone in this House would even think of having a rigged election, either here or at

the federal level or the municipal level or elsewhere. It just can't happen.

I'm amused, when I watch television or read the newspapers and hear what's happening in the United States and hear what the Republican candidate is saying about rigged elections and that certain cities, perhaps in Pennsylvania, already have people going in to vote two or three times, and that the system is not up to par. I don't think he's correct. Maybe he knows something we don't know.

I'm very proud of our system. The Attorney General spoke about the Charlottetown accord. We had another vote on another accord, the Meech Lake Accord. I remember that they advertised it well, and we all had a chance to vote on this issue. I remember Pierre Trudeau, our former Prime Minister, wrote a letter in the *Toronto Star* and other newspapers, saying how bad these accords would be. We had a democracy at work, and we were able to vote and decide whether or not the Meech Lake Accord and the other accord, the Charlottetown accord, were good measures or not.

The other point that I wanted to mention is what the Attorney General spoke about, the low voter turnout. I think that having people register at a young age helps, but there are other ways to get people out to vote. There are countries in this world where, if you don't vote, you get penalized. For example, in Australia, it's mandatory to vote, and if you don't vote, you get fined and you also have to do some kind of community service. That's how they get people out so that they can't say later on, "I never voted for that person there. I never voted for that candidate." Everyone has to vote. Apparently, from my information, there are 22 countries around the world where it's mandatory voting. You have to vote. I don't think that's the way we should go in Canada.

I think these measures, by opening it up and making it more available for young people to vote, and streamlining the system, are really good for our country and for our democracy.

As was mentioned by the Attorney General, there are parts of the world where you can't even vote. I remember going on a trip in 1995 with the mayor of Scarborough and we went with a delegation. I was 35 or 36 years old at the time, and believe me, I looked much younger than today. I recall we were in Beijing, China, and I went for a walk after a long day of meetings and so on by myself. I found this person following me. I asked him, "What are you doing following me?" He said "No, I'm just here to keep an eye on you." Then he asked me, "How did you get elected to office at such a young age?" I said to him, "I ran in an election." He told me that he had never voted in his life. He was about 40 years old. He said, "I've never voted in my life. I have no interest in voting, plus the government won't let me vote anyway, because the election is run by the Communist Party of China."

I may have just gone off-topic a little bit, but I think these issues highlight the efforts that we're making in Ontario to make sure that people can vote, that there's proper representation in the Far North and that young

people are able to register, all for the sake of democracy and getting people involved at a young age and saying that they can make a decision in what has to happen.

As I was saying, we hope that indigenous communities in the areas being reviewed by the commission will make their voices heard and help us find electoral boundaries that work for them. If this legislation passes, we expect that the committee would be appointed early next year. It would then have three months to carry out its examination and produce a report with concrete recommendations for the government to move forward. The plan is that any recommended changes to the Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay electoral districts would be implemented in time for the 2018 election.

Madam Speaker, this is a bill that we hope will carry support across party lines and political ideologies. The measures we're proposing here don't favour one party over another and don't favour the government over the opposition. We're doing something that would help all three parties—not only the three parties here, but also the Green Party or any other party that comes up in the future.

The last time I ran, I remember there was a Family Coalition candidate and a Libertarian candidate, I believe, and the three major parties. We have an opportunity—people can choose. Oddly enough in my riding, about 5% of the vote was for the Green Party. People voted for the Green Party. The Green Party is known in Europe and in other parts of the world as well. They have an agenda, which I don't totally agree with, but I think it's an agenda that—they look at it—they want to see how the environment affects them as a citizen of Ontario and a citizen of Canada.

Again, we're not doing this for ourselves or for the Green Party or for the other opposition parties; we're doing it for the good of Ontarians in general. There's no favouritism here at all. It's a pretty straightforward bill. I think that it should be debated, but more work will be done at the committee level, when it's sent down to committee, and we can hear from the public, hear from representatives, make any changes that we need to make and bring it up here for third reading and then a final vote.

Again, this is a bill that we hope will carry support across party lines and across political ideologies. The measures we're proposing here don't favour any one party over another. Most are the direct result of recommendations by our province's Chief Electoral Officer, who is governed by a priority that everyone in this House shares: preserving the strength of our democracy by maintaining a modern and trusted election system.

Though that democracy is a constant work-in-progress, we believe that this bill represents a measured step forward. It envisions a more active and engaged electorate and a modern, effective election system. Most importantly, it addresses the issues we're facing today in a way that we believe will start us on the right path. This is only the start, Madam Speaker, in my view.

I remember in 2014, during the last election, my mother was in the hospital—I think it was for the

municipal elections, because it was the same year, in 2014. She was in the hospital. The city of Toronto has tablet voting, like a tablet with the names of the candidates, and the person who is in the hospital can vote from their hospital bed. I remember, one day I was there and the elections person of Toronto showed up and asked, “Where’s your mother?” I said, “I don’t know. I just got here.” They said, “Well, someone told me she’s getting X-rays done.” I said, “I don’t know.” And they said, “We’re not going to leave until she comes back and gets a chance to vote,” which is pretty incredible, considering the fact that 20 years ago this wouldn’t be thought of.

At the city of Toronto level—and hopefully here at this level, too—we’ll be able to find people and give them the opportunity to vote, which is a sacred right. Most of the world doesn’t have this kind of an opportunity. I think that Canada’s democracy is one of the best in the world.

I think this bill addresses issues we’re facing today in a way that we believe will start us on the right path now, and pave the road for improvements and performance to come. Who knows how voting will be done 20 years from now?

I know that it’s hard to do voting online. Someone else could push the buttons instead of you, yourself. We’re not at the point now where you can do thumbprints or anything else of that kind and say, “Hi, it’s me, Lorenzo Berardinetti, and I want to vote in this election.” At some point, that’s going to happen, but I don’t know when.

As members of this Legislature, we need to always be aware of the fact that we need to improve our democracy in better ways and eventually make a system that works for everyone in Ontario and that makes it easy for them to vote. What I don’t like hearing—people will say to me, “I didn’t vote for the Prime Minister,” or “I didn’t vote for this Premier,” or “I didn’t vote for this mayor,” and I ask them why. And they say, “Well, I was busy,” or “I couldn’t make it that day. But I would never vote for that person anyway.” So this makes it easier for them to not have that excuse. I think that we have to be proactive here and ask people to come out and vote, and make sure that they do vote, so that they get the government they want.

I thank you for your indulgence. I got off-topic a little bit here, but it’s an issue I feel very passionate about.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it’s almost 10:15, I will be recessing the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’d like to introduce guests of page captain Emily Royce: parents, Christa Royce and Brent Royce; grandmother Dianne Royce; grandparents Lois and Ron Robinson; and an exchange student from Brazil, Isabel de Oliveira. Welcome.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would like to welcome corrections officers Andrew Parker, Matt Stickle and Carsten Schiller, who are joining us today from Central North Correctional Centre in Simcoe county.

Also joining us today from the Child Advocacy Centre of Simcoe/Muskoka, which serves my riding of Barrie, are executive director Jennifer Jackson and abuse prevention coordinator Samantha Ward.

Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I’m pleased to welcome to Queen’s Park today family members of page Paige MacCarthy: mother, Josi MacCarthy; father, Kevin MacCarthy; brother Aidan MacCarthy; brother Liam MacCarthy; and grandmother Angela Samerelli.

Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Today, I welcome guests of page captain John Papanikolaou: mother, Elena Poulos; father, Frank Papanikolaou; grandparents Dina and John Papanikolaou; and grandparents Vicky and George Poulos. They’re in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce Angie Valentini; she will be joining us a little bit later in question period. She is a guest here as a result of purchasing a visit to Queen’s Park at a charity auction at WoodGreen Community Services.

Mr. Michael Harris: I’d like to welcome Nicole Clarkson to the west lobby for question period this morning.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Today is corrections lobby day today at Queen’s Park. I am pleased to welcome a full house of so many correctional officers, probation and parole officers from both the adult and youth side; OPSEU Unified workers; correctional nurses from across the province. I can’t recognize everyone who is here today, but specifically I would also like to welcome members from OPSEU’s MERC and health and safety teams: Monte Vieselmeyer, Tammy Carson, Greg Arnold, Mike Lundy, Sean Dunn, Scott McIntyre and Jim Richards. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I’d like to introduce a couple of people in the gallery today: first, my intern for this term, Ms. Emily Trudeau; and also another member of the famous Colle family, Mr. Stephen Colle, my constituency assistant.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It’s a great pleasure to welcome members from the Turkish community on the occasion of the Turkish republic flag-raising day today, headed by His Excellency the consul general, Mr. Erdeniz Şen, Dr. Mehmet Bor, Mr. Celal Uçar, Mrs. Yildiz Ünsal, Mr. Ismail Vataner, Mr. Ruhi Tuna and Mr. Bora Celikel. Please join me in welcoming them. I invite everyone to attend the Turkish flag-raising day today.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I’d like to welcome to the House Janice Robinson, Brian Prousky and David Rivard, who are here at the Legislature for the Stand Up for Kids Awards in recognition of individuals or organizations that have the courage to stand up and take action to prevent or stop child abuse or neglect. They’re three

CEOs from our children's aid societies here in Toronto. Thank you very much and welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Halton correctional officers from the Maplehurst facility. Here this morning are Ryan Graham, Chad Oldfield and Chris Abbott. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I just want to acknowledge Shannon Zimmerman in the gallery here. I just learned that she has accepted a wonderful opportunity in Ottawa. She has worked with many members on this side of the House. We're deeply appreciative to her and we wish her all the very best.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm here to welcome a guest of page Cooper Custance: a family friend, Karen Beverly. She's not here; she's coming either today—or this afternoon. Anyway, welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have an introduction. In the Speaker's gallery today—would the members please join me in welcoming the family of Clerk Deborah Deller.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us her “voluntold” husband, Garry Deller; her sister Gillian Anderson, and her husband, Jim; her brother Rod Hurd, and his wife, Janet; and her nephews Andrew and Jonathan.

The Clerk's son, Brad, her daughter, Sarah, and her son-in-law, Karl, could not be with us today, but we welcome them in spirit. Thank you for being here today.

CLERK OF THE ASSEMBLY
GREFFIÈRE DE L'ASSEMBLÉE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize our Clerk, Ms. Deb Deller, on her last full week of service here in the Legislature, by taking up to five minutes for each caucus to speak and for the Clerk to present a response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ah! We now officially get to hear her speak.

We have a motion before us to have a tribute paid to our dear Clerk. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, Deborah Deller says that getting a job at the Ontario Legislature is like entering a lobster trap: Once you get in, you can't get out. That's because our work here is so interesting, always challenging, and, when your efforts have made a difference, so fulfilling. That's true for both members and staff.

Deb was caught in our particular lobster trap some 37 years ago. After graduating from the University of Western Ontario and taking a backpacking tour across

Europe, she accepted an offer of a position as a tour guide here in our historic heritage Legislative Building. Her obvious intelligence, warm personality, sense of humour and dedication soon led to further opportunities, and she became an attendant in the chamber, where she helped to supervise our legislative pages, and before long a committee Clerk, advising on the standing orders and procedure in our all-party standing committees of the Legislature.

In 1990, when the member for Simcoe–Grey, the member for Timmins–James Bay and I were elected to serve here for the first time, Deb had become the senior committee Clerk, with leadership and supervisory responsibilities. Whenever chaos exploded in a committee meeting, which was so often in those days, Deb would be called in to calm it down and sort it out. In those early days of Bob Rae's NDP government, with so many new members learning on the job—myself included—her role was very, very important. Deb performed it with polished professionalism, again distinguishing herself for the next challenge.

In 1992, she became a table Clerk, working here in the chamber and wearing the traditional black robes and those tricorne hats, advising the Speaker and members on procedure and doing all the preparation and follow-up that goes on back in the Clerk's offices. She worked with and learned from distinguished table colleagues like Smirle Forsyth, Alex McFedries and Claude DesRosiers.

When it came time for Claude to consider retiring, about a decade ago, Deb, as Deputy Clerk, was the only perfectly qualified candidate to assume the Clerk's position, and it was our good fortune that she applied for the role.

On March 21, 2007, the very first day of a glorious new spring—and, coincidentally or not, the start of the lobster season in Atlantic Canada, Deb became the very first female Clerk in the history of the Ontario Legislature. Over the past nine and a half years, every single day she has demonstrated that the Legislature made the right choice in appointing her.

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In the House, she has always been non-partisan, neutral and fair, as our table staff always are and always must be. Her years of experience gave her a vast knowledge, not only of our standing orders and their implications and applications, but also of parliamentary precedents, conventions and customs which come to us from Westminster and across the Commonwealth.

The Clerk of the Ontario Legislature has the rank and status of a deputy minister in the provincial government. Not only does the Clerk have responsibilities in the chamber, the Clerk is effectively the chief administrative officer of a vast enterprise known as the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, with an annual budget of \$233 million when you include the budgets of our nine parliamentary officers, including the Auditor General.

It's a huge job, Deb, and you've done it extremely well. You've raised the bar when it comes to effective-

ness and integrity, the key indicators upon which all of us in public life are judged.

Not only a leader here, Deb has been a leader amongst her colleagues across the country. Within the Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada, she has served on many of the association's committees including technology, education and professional development. In addition, she has held every position on the association's executive, including president. She has only enhanced our Legislature's reputation in our nation's capital and in the capital cities of the provinces across Canada.

She's been here for some of the most tumultuous events in the Legislature's history. In April of 1997, the House sat for nine consecutive days, 24 hours a day, without interruption. For the benefit of the news media, I state categorically that the MPPs did not seek or receive overtime pay. Some members may recall that we were debating the City of Toronto Act, and one of the opposition parties thought it was a good idea to table 13,000 amendments while the bill was at the committee-of-the-whole stage. Because of the wording of the time allocation motion, once the process started—just like in the early days of World War I—it could not be stopped.

So we sat, and we sat, and we sat in session, without a break for nine days; and as Mr. Speaker Chris Stockwell called it, it was a “procedural impasse of logarithmic proportions.” As members do, we complained to each other and of course we blamed the members on the other side of the House. At times, tempers were very heated, and at one point I thought Speaker Stockwell might need a bodyguard to protect him from the PC caucus.

But the untold story of that unfortunate period is how incredibly hard the Clerks-at-the-Table had to work for those nine days. Deb, Todd Decker and Lisa Freedman were here around the clock, the whole time, reading the amendments one by one—and remember, there were only three of them. Working in shifts, grabbing a bite to eat and a nap whenever possible in their offices, they virtually lived here in the legislative precinct until it was over. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, never in the field of parliamentary conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

In her demanding professional life, Deb has been supported by her wonderful family: Garry, who is here, who has himself had a distinguished career with the Toronto Police Service; her daughter, Sarah, who has recently married and now lives in Halifax; and her son, Brad, who is a pilot with the Canadian Armed Forces Search and Rescue.

On behalf of the official opposition, the Ontario PC caucus, Deb, we will miss you. We thank you. We salute your outstanding public service to the people of Ontario and we wish you continued good health and happiness in the years ahead.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further tributes? The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, I want to wish Deb Deller a very happy

retirement. I'm sure that Deb has been ready for this day to come for some time. Dealing with all of us can't be that easy, that's for sure—of course not you, Mr. Speaker; I'm sure you're a charm day in and day out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You get an extra question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess I'm skating on thin ice with question period coming up, right?

Anyway, as all of us know and as you've heard from the previous speaker, Deb began her career at Queen's Park as a tour guide, leading inquiring young minds eager to learn, through this beautiful building and passing on her excitement about our province's legislative process.

She now oversees the work of nearly 400 staff and advises the Speaker on all kinds of procedural issues. Deb has offered her expertise to many international advisory projects—again, as has already been mentioned—travelling everywhere from Tanzania to Australia, New Zealand to Mexico. I know she takes pride in her ability to offer guidance on parliamentary rules and processes, including the role of the Speaker, the role of the opposition, privilege and financial oversight processes.

Deb's work with the Canadian Study of Parliament Group has taken her to many universities across the province of Ontario where she shared her knowledge and experience, and where she continued to inspire young people to learn about their government and engage with our democracy—truly important work.

I'm very grateful, Deb, and the NDP caucus is very grateful, for your many years of service, for your sense of humour in dealing with the many procedural issues that we as MPPs like to argue about, and for your dedication to this special, special place. I know that New Democrats have tested you from time to time, including the late, the great Peter Kormos. With everything from hoist motions to assertions of contempt of Parliament, we certainly did our jobs to make your job a challenging one. We know, though, that you certainly fulfilled that role with absolute professionalism.

I actually had the honour to serve for a few months prior to becoming leader of the Ontario NDP as a deputy Deputy Speaker, and so I was able to see, in a very special way—a very upfront and close way—Deb Deller in action in her role as the Clerk as she advised the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers about the changing, living evolution of parliamentary democracies worldwide. I was not aware that our Legislative Assembly should be keeping up with some of these other democracies around the world, because it's not just about ancient, past precedent, but it's also about decisions that need to be made in the here and now.

We talked about thorny issues; for example, about how far a member should go in using or abusing their privilege in the House to perhaps use slanderous or libellous descriptions of private individuals or businesses that otherwise might spur lawsuits. Now, I'm not saying that was Peter Kormos, but it might have been. That was something that I was educated about in that forum. I really was unaware of the way that the Clerks, and par-

ticularly Deb Deller, were monitoring events around the world and informing our Speakers and our Deputy Speakers about how to best keep our Parliament up with the times, if you will.

As the leader, I've also had to wrestle with Deb a little bit around, for example, office space for my team after an election campaign. We didn't always see eye to eye in these interactions, but, as I said previously, Deb was always the ultimate professional and always had a reason for why she made the decision she made and had no qualms about walking you through the reasons why she made the decision she made. I have to say, on every occasion, those reasons held water, because she's a very, very diligent woman. Deb, you did an amazing, amazing job.

She was always willing, of course, as we know, because we always watch the legislative channel when we get home to our apartments or to our houses—we watch to see how we did. We know that Deb is always willing to record a segment for the Ontario legislative television channel so that the public can understand the intricacies of our government. Her passion for education has followed her from her days as a tour guide through to this very day.

You know, as was mentioned by the previous speaker, when we thank the MPPs' families when we do our tributes to those members who have served here and have passed on, we often thank their families for the fact that we take so much time here away from family, and we recognize that families sacrifice for having their loved ones serve here in this Legislature as MPPs. But as the previous speaker mentioned, we know, Deb, that you put in the same kind of hours that we put in. We know that your efforts have also impacted your time with family. So I was pleased to hear the other night in the dining room that, upon your retirement now, you'll be seeking other interests. You'll be sailing around the world, perhaps, and finding your inner artist, which I'm very, very excited about. I've noticed the beautiful artwork that you choose for your office. I'm sure you're going to enjoy many, many happy years of retirement.

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On behalf of all of us in the NDP—our MPPs, our staff—I want to say thank you so very much. We're going to miss you greatly. You've done a wonderful job for the people of Ontario.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll be sharing my time today with the member from St. Catharines.

Laughter.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know everyone is happy to hear that.

It's a great pleasure to rise today and to express our gratitude to Deborah Deller for her years of service as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and to wish her the very best in retirement.

For almost a decade, Deb has been a crucial support for MPPs, staff and many others who have passed

through the halls of the Legislature, as you have heard from my colleagues across the floor. She knows those halls very well, because of her time as a tour guide. She rose through the ranks quickly, through the Clerk's office, working as a Clerk Assistant and Deputy Clerk before being appointed as Clerk in 2007, and becoming an expert in parliamentary rules and procedure.

Over her career, as you've heard, Speaker, Deb has advised and offered training to Parliaments from across the Commonwealth, from South Africa to Ghana to Kenya.

Des gouvernements, des écoles et des organismes du monde entier ont profité de l'expertise et des conseils de Deb.

Today she oversees the work of over 400 staff, who will miss her experience and expertise.

But what MPPs will miss most about Deb isn't her administrative prowess or her procedural know-how. We'll miss the grounded, earnest way that she has listened to and respected each member.

I want to say that I think the single most remarkable feat is that Deb keeps a straight face through it all. It is remarkable. Because I check. I do check: "Is she going to keep a straight face through this?" And she does. It's remarkable.

She has accommodated our needs and helped us turn our goals and vision into laws and regulations.

I was going to say that my first interaction with Deb was as part of the class of 2003, when you briefed us, Deb, on the rules and procedures and standing orders. But actually, I realize, and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills has reminded me, that my first interaction was probably when I was sitting there, when I wasn't being dragged out of the Legislature, cheering on the opposition during that time in 1997. You kept a straight face when I came in as part of the class of 2003, so thank you, Deb. You have helped us enormously through the years. Thank you very, very much.

Earlier this year, Deb appeared before the federal government's procedure and House affairs committee. The committee was exploring ways to make the work-life balance of MPs more reasonable, ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of political life left room for family and personal time. Deb spoke at that time to the committee, as the leader of the third party has noted, and talked about the similar roles and responsibilities that we have here. In the meeting, Deb took a moment to acknowledge and to defend the tough, often overlooked work done by people in this chamber: the very long hours, the time away from family and friends.

So today I want to do the same for you, Deb, by acknowledging the long hours that you spent keeping this place on track, time that you were not able to spend with your family. I want to acknowledge and thank your family today on all of our behalf—time you couldn't spend with your children, Brad and Sarah, who I know are so proud of you, and with your husband, Garry, who's here today and, I'm sure, is excited about having more time to spend with you on your sailboat.

Deb, thank you for your service. I know that all members join me in wishing you calm waters, clear sailing and a happy retirement ahead. And you never have to watch question period again. Merci. Meegwetch.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I get at least a few seconds here to add to the tribute to Deb Deller that is a heartfelt tribute by all members of the Ontario Legislature, and not just those who are here today, but those who have served in the Legislature over the years. I've had the privilege of serving with eight different Premiers for the province of Ontario and eight Lieutenant Governors and numerous Speakers, but only three Clerks, so the job has more permanency than, perhaps, some of the other jobs that we have.

I've had the opportunity, because I've been here the length of time I have, to watch Deb progress through those various steps. You could tell early on that she was going to do exactly that. When it came to 2007, there was a logical choice to be the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that was Deb Deller. You could tell that because you had seen all the steps she had taken and the interactions that she had been involved in over the years.

The Speaker gave a nice tribute to Deb at a reception which was held yesterday, or the day before perhaps. It was, I thought, appropriate that he quoted from Inside Queen's Park. I then went and looked at Inside Queen's Park, because it noted the role of the Clerk. It says:

"You have to be quick on your feet in an often volatile environment while staying calm and keeping the Speaker cool, as well. Both Speaker and Clerk must deal with all three parties impartially every day, making for a distinct environment. The relationship between the Clerk and Speaker has to be based on trust. The Speaker's job can make him or her pretty unpopular with members on both sides of the House. The Clerk has to be there to discuss the business of the House, listen to the Speaker's perspective and provide consistent advice.... The Clerk has to provide the Speaker with the best possible advice, assistance and support, based on research and years of procedural knowledge. The Clerk must accept that the Speaker decides whether or not to take that advice." I can assure you if the Speaker takes the advice, it is sage advice, and the Speaker would stay out of trouble by doing so.

So, Deb, we really do appreciate it. The poker face that was mentioned—the face that doesn't change even when there are some extreme things being said in the House—is something for which she is characteristic. I can assure you that not all Clerks fit that particular category, as my recollection tells me, but I won't go into any detail there.

The Premier and others have made reference to the fact that, yes, we here in the Legislature know the outstanding job that you have done, but when you have an international reputation which you have earned over the

years, that really speaks well of you, and of the Legislative Assembly that we had the wisdom to choose you as Clerk and therefore share you with others around the world. You've done an excellent job in terms of educating others and assisting others in their jobs.

You've demonstrated clearly the attributes that we expect of a person in your position: integrity, impartiality, professionalism, detailed knowledge of the rules and everything about this House, and a sense of humour. All of us are going to miss you very much, as we do when we lose people who have been such a big part of our professional lives here as members of the Legislative Assembly. I do know that your family will look forward with anticipation to spending much more time with you. You will be gone from us in the physical sense, but your spirit and honour will live on for many, many years to come. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I pray your indulgence for a moment to offer some observations. I'm going to start with a joke to keep me in line. The terms of endearment that we express at one's retirement are an indication of that: the terms of endearment. Counting today's tribute, there will be five retirement parties for Deb Deller. It is, indeed, a testimony to a powerful, intelligent, straight-shooting woman—a mentor, a shining example of what women are capable of doing. I want to say thank you to her for teaching me. I love to learn. She's been a great teacher, a great mentor. There isn't anyone in this province who hasn't been touched by her work, and I mean that sincerely.

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When you take a look at individuals who have dedicated their lives in any shape or form over that number of years, those individuals must be listened to. Many cultures highlight that in their elders. She's not that old.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I cannot believe what's going to happen when she becomes an elder because the distribution of her wisdom has been so powerful, and I personally have been made a better person because of it.

I say to Deb Deller, you're not leaving this place. Your influence on this place, your passion for this place and your capacity to teach us will never be lost in this place. It could be considered to be inside baseball, but we have to understand that this inside baseball game influences the entire province, the entire country and the entire world because of what she's been able to do.

I want to say to you on a personal note, Deb, I can tell you that of the people I've spoken to from many countries, they've asked about Deb Deller. That's a testimony to her strength, her power, her knowledge, her kind heart and her humour. I am looking forward to chapter 12 in her book when she does a tell-all novel. She's promised me chapter 12. I also want to say to you that we now know, as she leaves, she's taking with her one of the world's largest Pez dispenser collections one could ever find.

There's another side to Deb that you don't know. She actually has an extremely, extremely high knowledge of

everything else that you want to talk about. I shared this the other day. It's called "Stump the Clerk." In Stump the Clerk, in all her years as Clerk, she's never been beaten. She's challenged absolutely everyone on staff. Yesterday, I challenged the members to try to ask her a question about this place and she will have an answer. That's a testimony to somebody who lives this place, who breathes this place, who has passion to make sure that our Legislature is held in the highest esteem.

I personally want to say to you, Deb, to the entire family, and especially Garry, thank you for the gift of this wonderful woman. I appreciate that very much. Thank you, Deb Deller.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I knew if I asked her to do that, she would not break the rules, so we kind of half broke the rules.

At this time, because of the motion, I am going to ask our Clerk, Deb Deller, to respond—to try.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): You might regret this because I have 37-odd years of stuff stored up inside this head.

Thank you all for your kind words. I am seized, I think, all this week with a mixture of nostalgia and excitement. I have loved every—almost every—minute of my time in this place. When I walked through these doors of this building for the first time all those years ago, I fell, then, hopelessly and irrevocably in love with this place, and I love it still, although like an aging spouse, I am more able to see its flaws.

I'll miss the place. I'll miss its intrigue. I'll miss its unpredictability. I'll miss the lingering scent of history in these halls. I'll even miss question period, but I'm not tuning in to see it.

Mostly, I have to say that I will miss the people that I've worked with over all these years, and among those people that I will miss are you, the politicians. I am one of those oddball people, I guess, who really enjoy politicians. I find them to be a dedicated, committed group of people who are bright, who have a great sense of humour and who are here because they want to make this place that we live in a good place to be.

So I want to say thank you, not for your words today but for what you do—what you do every day. You disrupt your lives to go into this public service. You spend long days and hours away from your families. You spend long days and hours working, very frequently on the weekends, and you don't really get a lot of thanks. You live under a microscope. I wish people knew the reality of the job you do, because if they did, I feel fairly certain that, like me, they would determine that no amount of money could ever convince me to do the job that you do. So thank you for that work. You need to stand up for yourselves. You need to understand that you are all here for the same reasons and respect that about each other.

I will miss—I'm sorry to say this—more than you, the staff of this place. This is a group of people who are expert in what they do. They're extraordinarily professional and their only goal in coming here is to make sure

that the House and its committees can do the work that they have to do. These people are so good at their jobs, they make life as a Clerk as stress-free as it possibly can be, and this place, with or without me, will carry on serving you expertly and professionally.

I have to say a word to my family. This job, like yours, does kind of consume you. It consumes your attention and it consumes your energy. And so I think that part of what fed my decision to finally retire is that at some point you have to take stock of the balance of your work and your life and your commitment to your profession and your commitment to your family, and it is long, long, long overdue for me to make my family a priority in a way that they have not been up to now.

They are, in some ways, long suffering. I have missed events and commitments to my family because of this place, and they have understood and tolerated it and actually even been fairly interested in the work I do here. So from my heart to theirs, I thank you very much.

I'm almost done. I'll be brief. I do want to say that I am excited about the next chapter in my life. Garry and I, many of you know, are sailors. I'm excited to go sailing. He's excited to go sailing with me and without my BlackBerry. We have a long someday-list of travels that I think we want to get to, and maybe we'll even tend a garden and try and make something grow for a change in that place. We haven't had time to do that before.

I just want to say this, going back to you people: The owl in the centre of those two archways is an owl that looks down on the government. It's an owl that is there to remind those members that sit on the government side to govern wisely. The eagle in the centre of the arches on the opposite gallery faces the opposition, and it's there to remind those of you that sit on the opposition side to be vigilant. Those are the roles you play, but they are interactive roles. The motto of this place is, "Hear the other side." It is important in the governing of this province that you hear both sides of every argument, and I implore you to do that going forward. Thank you for the work you do.

Applause.

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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I seek unanimous consent to present a single petition at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader is looking for a single petition to be presented, with unanimous consent. Do we agree? Agreed.

She's not ready for this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, that's why I had to have unanimous consent. She would have told me: "Don't accept it; it's a prop."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas after 37 years of outstanding service to the province of Ontario, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Deborah Deller, has announced her retirement; and

“Whereas to the great fortune of the assembly, her career amazingly began all those years ago because she happened to match the size of the previous ordered tour guide uniform; and

“Whereas over the years, she has worked tirelessly in the service of Parliament, and on one occasion, sitting continuously for nine consecutive days; and

“Whereas throughout her career, she has trained and answered endless questions from members of provincial Parliament, Speakers of the Legislature”—except for the present person—“and staff of parliamentary protocol; and

“Whereas she has clocked in hundreds of hours of meetings with the Board of Internal Economy, Speakers’ school and others too many to mention; and

“Whereas throughout her many years of service, she has served the members of provincial Parliament with fairness, dedication and wisdom, providing countless hours of counsel, be it procedural, professional and personal; and

“Whereas her unwavering support of the members of this Legislature is matched only by her support of the Toronto Blue Jays, as she once called the House to order by yelling, “Play ball,” during a post-season series; and

“Whereas on the occasion of her retirement, we bear witness to a significant event, the retirement of the first female Clerk of this House, whose long and distinguished career has been one of great integrity and professionalism;

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

“That the members of provincial Parliament do hereby extend to Deborah Deller their sincere and grateful appreciation for her dedicated service to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, their congratulations on her well-earned retirement and their best wishes to her, her husband Garry and her family for continued success, happiness and good health in years to come.”

Signed, every member of the House.

Applause.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): It’s not certified.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’s not certified or stamped, so would the Clerk please put the prop down?

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Deb Deller. I thank all members for their kind and heartfelt thanks and to her family for being here.

Therefore, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The Premier may not want to admit it, but we have a hydro crisis in the province of Ontario, and it is very real. You just have to look at the story in the London Free

Press this week. The article talks about Gail and Rob Fullerton from the heritage village of Paisley in Bruce county. They decided in 2014 to open a local food store. The Fullertons’ goal, with expensive renovations, was to have ultra energy efficiency in every aspect of their building. They invested to have energy efficiency. But because of Liberal energy policies, even with their energy efficiency, their hydro bills are skyrocketing.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government open their eyes and realize that businesses cannot remain open, cannot cope, and cannot afford their hydro bills unless we see some difference, some real commitment to relief for Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Growth is going to want to speak to the supports that we have put in place for businesses, including the changes that we’re making around electricity prices.

The Leader of the Opposition will know that the announcements we made in the throne speech were directed, yes, at individuals in their homes, but also at businesses. Taking 8% off electricity prices and working to include more businesses in the conservation initiative, those were directed at businesses that were smaller than the businesses that could take advantage of that up-to-34% reduction previously.

To the crisis in electricity, I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that in 2003, there was a crisis in electricity in this province, and we’ve worked to fix that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The crisis is now. Families across Ontario are struggling.

The London Free Press article continued to tell the story of the Fullertons. They spent half a million dollars to make it the most energy-efficient building possible. But despite all their efficiencies, less than four years after opening, the business is facing hydro costs that will soon be back to where they were before the renovations.

Gail Fullerton, the manager, said, “The single biggest obstacle to our success and to guarantee a grocery store remains in this town,” the single biggest obstacle—hydro. I repeat: They can’t stay open because of hydro bills.

My question to the Premier is, what do you have to say to the Fullerton family, that just wants to work hard to keep a business open in a small town in Ontario but, because of hydro bills, is worried they have to shut the doors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We’ve recognized that there are challenges for business with regard to energy costs. That’s why we’ve proudly put in place an 8% discount for all small businesses, all businesses across this province and all residents across this province. So if you have a \$4,000-a-month energy bill, that’s going to save a small business \$4,800 a year.

Yet the Leader of the Opposition continues to denigrate our efforts to bring down those costs for business. It's almost as though he's trying to have two positions at the same time—like he's not got a pattern of doing that, Mr. Speaker, a very long and arduous pattern of doing that.

We're going to keep promoting small businesses. We're going to keep our economy growing. We're going to continue to make Ontario the easiest place in the world in which to do business. The result will be more jobs and more small businesses going forward.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The Liberal front bench wants to argue that somehow there's going to be hydro relief. There's not. They bring in a PST rebate but they get rid of the clean energy benefit, which was a larger rebate.

Families are going to see their bills go up. Next year, bills will continue to go up for seniors, for families and for businesses. There is no relief on the horizon. It's unaffordable. We need some real change, not Band-Aid solutions.

My question directly to the Premier: Rather than trying to point fingers and blame other people for the problems you've created for Ontario, what are you going to say to that family, that family that invested their life savings in energy-efficient upgrades and renovations to make their business work, and now once again, four years later, they can't afford their bills? It's unacceptable.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What we'll say to that family and what we'll say to small businesses across this province is that we're going to continue to invest with small businesses, contrary to the position taken by the Leader of the Opposition.

We're going to continue to fund them by helping them grow through our regional economic development funds. We took the capital tax off those businesses, something that the party opposite was opposed to us doing. We lowered the effective corporate tax rate in previous budgets, budgets that that party did not support, and that gives them a corporate tax rate that's 13% less than those small businesses that are operating across the border.

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Mr. Speaker, we brought in place the HST, something that party didn't support us on either, something that's saving our small businesses hundreds of millions of dollars in administration costs. I'll continue to speak on this issue if I have time.

Let's talk about regulatory burden. We're making Ontario the easiest place in North America in which to do business. We hear our small businesses—

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

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since I can't get an answer on hydro rates and they live in this fantasy world that everything is fine with the hydro crisis, I'll try a different tack. Let's talk about corrections.

Almost a year ago I toured the Thunder Bay jail, along with several members of the Ontario PC caucus. I could not believe that such deplorable conditions could exist in Ontario. The mayor of Thunder Bay referred to the jail as a "rat hole."

In fact after my visit, I challenged the Premier to visit the Thunder Bay jail. She has failed to do so because the Premier didn't want to admit that there could be Third World conditions in Ontario corrections. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Will she finally commit here today to visit the Thunder Bay jail and have a tour with OPSEU?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition implies, or states directly, that I am not concerned about the situation in the Thunder Bay jail—and, quite frankly, in other jails in Ontario. I have visited a jail in Ontario. I am concerned about it.

The status quo cannot continue, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be transformation. We have been working to make changes. As recently as a few days ago, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services talked about the changes that we know need to be made in terms of segregation. I know there needs to be change.

We've hired over 1,100 new correctional officers; we're hiring 2,000 over the next three years. We've put in place important security and infrastructure upgrades. But I know that there is more that needs to be done in terms of the bricks and mortar of these facilities, in terms of support for staff and for—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. I will note my question and my challenge for the Premier to commit to visit the Thunder Bay jail have not been answered. You can't go to that jail and not realize that something needs to be done.

We learned about the tragic story of Adam Capay, held in solitary confinement without a trial for years. Mike Lundy, president of OPSEU Local 737 said, "Staff and management have only done what we can do with the resources we have." He added, "All seven segregation cells at the century-old Thunder Bay District Jail are constantly full." Ideally, they would use segregation in order to maintain order, but their resources are stretched too thin. They have no options.

There are inadequate mental health resources in correctional facilities across Ontario and because of the lack of resources, because of the lack of commitment for the Premier to look at this, we're seeing stories like Adam Capay. The government failed Adam Capay. My question to the Premier is: Will the government actually commit to supporting to give the resources to corrections so another Adam Capay won't occur?

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

Hon. David Oraziatti: It's great to see the opposition's new-found compassion for our correctional system. I want to say to all of our correctional workers, the folks who are here today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I want to thank all of the correctional workers, the nurses, the health care folks and all of the folks who work in our correctional services ministry who are here today. I thank them for the work that they do on behalf of so many Ontarians.

We do take these concerns very seriously, Speaker, and we are acting. With respect to the Thunder Bay jail, we've added 26 new correctional officers since 2013. We are moving to improve the infrastructure: window replacements, a full body scanner, changes to unit doors, sally port doors being put on nine living units, and closed-circuit television. There are a number of infrastructure improvements, Speaker, that we continue to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Rhetoric is simply that: rhetoric.

Back to the Premier: The Thunder Bay jail is—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will be done.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk will come to order. If it happens again, including anyone else, I'll move immediately to that person and warn them.

Finish, please.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker.

Back to the Premier: The Thunder Bay jail is deplorable. There is no arguing that. But similar problems exist across this province. OPSEU's corrections division chair, Monte Vieselmeyer, has been telling this government for years that they've been calling for more money and resources for mental health care, because these people should have appropriate treatment. He said, "We've told them, and we've been ignored. But now ... they're trying to hide years of neglect."

Will the Premier visit the Thunder Bay jail and see what years of Liberal neglect look like? And while she's there, will she look and see where Adam Capay was held by this Liberal government for four years—

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

Hon. David Oraziatti: The privatization plan of the prior government is not something we want to embark on. We're committed to publicly run institutions and supporting public services in something like our correctional services.

I have to say that the investments that we continue to make are very, very important: 1,100 new officers; we've added mental health nurses, from 13 to 49 new nurses; we've added probation and parole officers and reduced the caseload work that they have; and we continue to make investments—\$25 million this year, up over 7%, for programs for rehabilitation for individuals in our correctional services.

We're committed to a full and comprehensive review to make the investments that need to be made in infrastructure and support staff across the correctional services. We're committed to doing that.

NURSING HOME DEATHS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. It's been two days since we found out about the tragic alleged murders of eight seniors living in long-term-care homes in Woodstock and London. Has the Premier asked her minister to undertake any review of oversight, inspection and safety in our long-term-care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said for the last couple of days, this is an extremely distressing situation. The murder investigation is obviously a tragedy for the families and for the communities involved. I understand that there's a real desire for answers. I think that is shared by all of us in this House.

Many of the answers will be provided through the ongoing police investigation and through subsequent court proceedings. It's also possible that the independent office of the coroner may decide to conduct a coroner's inquest into these deaths. We have to let those proceedings play out.

But as I said yesterday, I'm committed to looking at all options, including calling an independent review or inquiry into these deaths. I am absolutely open to that. But in the meantime, it's important for the member opposite to remember that the police have made clear that there is no threat to safety and we need to let those proceedings unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everyone in this House respects the need for the police to conduct their investigation. But there are 78,000 families in our province who have loved ones in the long-term-care system in Ontario. They're looking to the Premier and her government for reassurance that their family members are safe in their homes following news of these shocking alleged murders.

I'm asking a very straightforward question, Speaker. Has the Premier ordered any action or review of current oversight, inspection and safety in Ontario's long-term-care system yet?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As the Premier has said, the police have specifically indicated to all Ontarians, particularly those who reside in our long-term-care homes, that there is no need to be concerned about their safety as

a result of this occurrence. We have reiterated the same assurance to Ontarians. I think it's important that all Ontarians understand—and within this Legislature as well—the importance of allowing a police investigation to occur and proceed.

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Of course, we're co-operating fully with the police investigation. Of course, the ministry also has plans, within the confines of what we're able to do so we don't prejudice or hinder the police investigation, to do our own investigations and look at precisely what has taken place in these two long-term-care homes. But it's imperative, Mr. Speaker, that we ensure that the police investigation is allowed to continue, that we give the coroner the ability, if he should choose, to take measures to more fully investigate this.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question has to do with the oversight that's needed to protect the most vulnerable seniors and residents of long-term care, not the police investigation. And I'm not alone in asking. Seniors' advocates, health care professionals and families are asking the same questions and, really, are just looking for reassurance on an issue of vital importance: the safety and security of people living in long-term care.

If the Premier is open to an independent review or an inquiry into the oversight of long-term-care facilities, why not give people the peace of mind that they seek sooner rather than later? Why won't the Premier order that review today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's important that Ontarians understand the level of inspection that we do each year in all of our long-term-care homes. In fact, 100% of our long-term-care homes were inspected in 2014; 100% of our long-term-care homes were inspected in 2015. Continually, on an ongoing basis, every single long-term-care home in this province will be inspected annually.

Mr. Speaker, we have a whole set of measures which allow us to understand if there are critical events that occur, if there are patient concerns or public concerns. We have a hotline where we invite the public if they've got any concerns about a loved one or a situation in a long-term-care home.

We also, of course, have requirements on long-term-care homes themselves that they report any critical incident or any unexpected death or any occurrence which might be suggestive of abuse or neglect. There is a legal requirement for them to proceed in that fashion. We prioritize those critical incidents and investigate them thoroughly and immediately.

NURSING HOME DEATHS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. I can only imagine what it must feel like as a family member of someone who passed away in long-term care to learn that your loved one was taken from you in such an untimely and heartless way. These alleged

murders have shone a light on what many people have long believed to be serious concerns. Seniors' advocates, professionals and families are not asking the government to interfere with a police investigation, nor am I, but we are rightfully calling for a broader review of the system.

When will the Premier order that review?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I would remind the leader of the third party that these are allegations that are being dealt with. They are allegations and, in the context of that reality, there is an investigation that's ongoing. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has laid out the inspection process that we have in place, which is an annual process. Obviously, we are all very, very concerned and want to know what the answers will be, what the answers are in this very terrible situation.

But we are dealing with allegations. There is a police investigation that's ongoing. There may be a coroner's inquest. That is up to the office of the coroner. I have said if we perceive that there's a need to do an inquiry or a different review, we are absolutely open to doing that but we must let the proceedings that are in place unfold as they need to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Of course the police investigation is of utmost importance. I don't think anybody here disagrees. But its outcome will address only the terrible, alleged murders in these two homes. What about the other 78,000 residents of Ontario's long-term-care homes and their families who worry about them each and every day, who worry about them more now in light of these tragic allegations?

When will the Premier be taking action to reassure all Ontarians that this province has the most effective oversight and monitoring of our long-term-care facilities as humanly possible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to go over the process once again in the final supplementary, but I just want to say to this House and to the people of Ontario that in a situation like this, where there are very serious allegations and where there are processes that need to take place, my concern and the question that I have for my staff and my colleagues is: Is there a systemic issue that we need to look at?

I understand that the leader of the third party is asking that exact question. It is the question that we have to ask. We have protocols in place and we have allegations in a very terrible situation, and where those two meet and where the questions need to be asked—some of those questions will be asked as part of the proceedings that are under way now. We need to hear the answers to those questions and not get in the way of the proceedings that are under way right now.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said that Ontario's long-term-care homes have "among the best oversight mechanisms for critical incidents, as well as for general annual

inspections, in the world.” I think he repeated some of that already this morning.

But not everyone agrees. The Auditor General reviewed Ontario’s long-term care inspection program last year and concluded that there were serious problems and the process could be improved. The tragedy that is unfolding in Woodstock and London right now should give us all pause to consider the things that we can do better to protect and care for seniors living in long-term care.

Yesterday, the Premier was open to a review. I’m asking today: Don’t delay. There is no need to wait. There is absolutely no need to wait. Please, order that review today. Will the Premier do that?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the changes recommended by the Auditor General for our inspection process are precisely the changes that we have made and implemented. Every single home is still being inspected every year: 100% of homes are being inspected. That means that investigators go into every home. They meet with residents. They meet with families. They interview staff to identify any issues of concern.

In fact, consistent with the Auditor General’s recommendations, we’re focusing those investigations based on risk. She said, “The ministry needs to better prioritize comprehensive inspections, allocate resources more efficiently and assess the frequency of comprehensive inspections based on risk.” That is exactly the change that we’ve made.

Of course, if staff identify any additional or further concerns in the course of these annual, 100% comprehensive inspections, they will pursue those concerns directly at that time.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The first snowfall is an annual reminder of the government’s continued failures of winter road maintenance. After a scathing auditor’s report on this government’s substandard winter road maintenance contracts, indications that we’re paying more to re-extend with contractors whose agreements had just been cancelled mean motorists can expect more of the same.

There is something clearly wrong when the minister rewards the same contractors who walked away from fixed-price, 10-to-12-year contracts, with brand new agreements at increased rates.

The minister was unable to tell me during estimates how much we were paying for re-extending with cancelled contractors in Kenora, Sudbury and Ottawa. So can the minister tell us today how much more taxpayers will be paying those contractors, including in Niagara and Hamilton, to meet his winter maintenance contract standards that have risked Ontario motorists’ safety?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the question. I know, obviously, as we head into this winter season—in fact, in some parts of Ontario, we have already begun to see winter weather—that winter

maintenance with respect to our highways is a concern that’s top of mind for the travelling public.

The member opposite would know, as I’ve said many times in this House, that the safety of the travelling public is the top priority of the Ministry of Transportation. I recognize—as again, I’ve said in this House, particularly in response to the auditor’s report—that there is additional work the ministry needs to do in conjunction with our contractor partners right across the province. It’s one of the reasons that we accepted each of the auditor’s recommendations. It’s also one of the reasons that we’ve moved forward, working closely with our contractors to make sure, as we enter into this winter season, that in each part of the province we are ready for winter weather that’s coming.

I’d be happy to elaborate in the second answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

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Mr. Michael Harris: So the minister is awaiting fine payments from many of these same contractors with one hand and handing out increases with the other.

Speaker, if the minister doesn’t want to tell us how much more we’re paying, then of course I will. During estimates, the minister’s deputy admitted that following the cancellation of regional contracts for Ottawa, Niagara, Sudbury and Kenora, the ministry was budgeting an extra \$31.6 million for winter road maintenance this year. Since that time, we have seen another re-negotiated contract in Hamilton.

Can the minister explain why we are paying at least \$31 million more to some of those same fined contractors who had walked away from their agreements?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I’d like to give the member from the opposition who has asked this question the benefit of the doubt. Of course, I would imagine that every single member of this Legislature would want to make sure that the Ministry of Transportation did everything that it possibly could to make sure that our contractor partners are ready for upcoming winter weather, so that we can provide maintenance on our highways in winter and year-round, Speaker. That’s what the travelling public expects and deserves.

I find it interesting that on the one hand, many months ago, that member and members of the Conservative Party were suggesting that we had not dedicated enough resources to the winter maintenance program, and today he’s questioning why we appear to be providing additional resources for winter maintenance, Speaker. There seems to be a bit of a disconnect in where that member was a few months ago and where he is today.

I will repeat again: The priority for the Ministry of Transportation is to make sure that we’re providing the winter maintenance that the people of Ontario expect and deserve. It’s why, for 13 years, we’ve had the safest highways in North America.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Earlier this week, I asked the minister to address the crisis in corrections and provide mental health supports for those who need it.

The minister replied, “Those supports ... are in place in all of our institutions.”

Well, Speaker, those supports don’t exist in every institution. Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay has an infirmary that has been converted to dorms for female inmates. They used to have an unofficial health unit, but it got closed.

How many infirmaries have never been opened, and how many mental health programs have been cut by this ministry?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I’m pleased to take the question. Again, I want to thank all of the folks who work in our correctional division for the work that they do.

What I can say with respect to mental health nurses, for example, is that we’ve hired 36 additional mental health nurses in our correctional division. That’s up from 13 to 49 now, since 2013 alone.

We’ve also invested \$25 million this year alone in programs to support inmates, including programs like domestic violence, guns and gangs, relapse prevention, and indigenous programming as well.

We continue to make these investments in our correctional system because we know it’s the right thing to do.

We’ve also committed to a full review, because we know that more needs to be done, and more investments need to be made to improve our infrastructure and to continue to build the staffing capacity that’s needed to ensure we have a correctional system that we all want to see.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There is a crisis in corrections, and this government talks and talks and talks, but after years of neglect, this ministry needs action, not announcements.

You avoided a strike by promising yet-unseen legislation, are installing body scanners without policies or staffing, and you’ve made changes to disciplinary segregation, but nothing for the majority indefinitely held without mental health supports.

What this government has allowed to happen to Adam Capay, the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner has now called “torture.” These aren’t decisions made by correctional staff or even the institution superintendent. It is the responsibility of the minister and the Premier.

Is neglect and torture acceptable to the minister and this Premier?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Speaker, what a ridiculous question. Of course it’s not.

We are taking action on this issue. It is a very, very important issue. Granted, the use of segregation is over-relied-on in the correctional division. The challenge that we have is physical infrastructure and space and, obviously, the conditions that an individual is in while in segregation, which we continue to work to improve.

But let me remind the member opposite that the Human Rights Commissioner, in fact, today said, “I

accept this was not an individual who could have remained in general population.” She also goes on to refer to systemic issues in the correctional system.

The point is that, yes, segregation is over-relied-on and we need to find better ways in our system to address these challenges. We’re committed to doing that. That’s why we’ve called for a full, intensive review of the entire correctional system in Ontario.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

We know that in Ontario, both English and French language skills are the foundation of success for newcomers in our communities and workplaces. In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, a significant number of residents rely on language training programs delivered by our school boards and other local agencies.

It’s crucial to my constituents and to newcomers across Ontario that these services are provided, so they can contribute fully to our province, society and economy. Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform this House of how her ministry is supporting newcomers in enhancing their language and literacy skills?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I’d like to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for advocating for newcomers in his riding and for his question.

Speaker, our government supports newcomers by improving their English and French skills through our adult language training program. This program provides tuition-free language training courses to all newcomers, including refugees, regardless of how long they have lived here in Canada, and also after they have become naturalized Canadian citizens.

The program also offers literacy classes to prepare newcomers for post-secondary studies, as well as citizenship classes, so that they learn the information they need to know to successfully pass the citizenship test.

This is only one of the many initiatives our government offers to newcomers so that they can integrate and contribute fully to our society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I thank the minister for her response. It’s very reassuring to see that our government is committing to helping immigrants succeed. I’m sure the minister would agree that the work of our school boards and local community agencies is critical to the success of our newcomers.

Mr. Speaker, it was great to have the minister recently visit my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore at the Mimico adult learning centre to promote access to this language training program, just a few blocks away from where my own family first came to live in Ontario.

I strongly believe it’s important that we continue to encourage newcomers across the province to access the adult language training program, so they can improve their speaking, reading and writing skills. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how our government is continuing

to work with school boards and local agencies to deliver these supports, so newcomers can succeed in this province?

Hon. Laura Albanese: Last week, I announced a continued investment of up to \$60 million for the free adult language training program for this year. This investment will assist up to 70,000 newcomers to improve their language skills.

The program continues to evolve to meet the unique needs of today's newcomers. For example, we're developing and piloting new e-learning options to make it easier for people to access the program no matter where they live in the province.

During my visit at the centre, it was great to meet people like Maria Ruiz, a small business owner today, who accessed the program when she first arrived in Canada. Now she's gone back to enhance her language skills.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, our government has invested more than \$710 million in the program because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In Dufferin-Caledon, we're very concerned about the safety of Highway 10 between Orangeville and Highway 89. One constituent wrote to me and said, "In light of recent severe accidents on Highway 10, I don't feel safe driving to work anymore...."

The ministry has decided to make some minor changes to the highway, but no one believes that these changes will address the safety concerns. The town of Mono has been trying to work with the minister for years to address the need for additional turning lanes.

Will the minister agree to meet with the town of Mono to work out solutions that will improve road safety along Highway 10?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for this question. It's the first time she's raised it by way of a question formally, but we've had the opportunity to chat about this informally. I am aware of the meeting that took place recently. I know that that was covered by some local media.

Of course, at all times, making sure that we maintain our highway infrastructure, whether we're talking about Dufferin-Caledon or we're talking about any corner of the province, is a priority for the Ministry of Transportation.

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I think the member opposite would know that in 2016-17, for example, we're investing nearly \$3 billion in Ontario's highways and bridges. This includes about \$1.6 billion in southern Ontario specifically. Having said that, I recognize that there is a challenge that is being expressed by people in her constituency, and I'm open to an ongoing conversation. If that requires an in-person meeting, that's something I'd be happy to take a look at. I

will also encourage MTO officials to continue to work with the community on a reasonable solution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. I will take you up on the offer to meet with Mono, because this is an important issue. I've written the ministry on six different occasions over the last three years about concerned residents in my riding along Highway 10. Drivers in Dufferin have started avoiding the highway because they are so concerned about safety, putting more strain on local roads and municipal road budgets. I am pleased to hear that you want your ministry to continue to work with Mono, but I would also like to take you up on the offer of having a meeting directly with the politicians in Mono.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I said in the opening answer, I'm happy to follow up in that regard. I will say, as well—pointing out as I did in the first answer—that \$2.7 billion is being invested in Ontario's highways in 2016-17. It's important to note that since 2003, this government has built 1,409 what we call "lane kilometres"—that's the total length of individual lanes of new highway—and 215 new bridges across the province of Ontario.

Whether we're talking about Highway 10 in Dufferin-Caledon or talking about four-laning 11 and 17 in northern Ontario or the extension of Highway 427 in York region—something I know will also support people living in Dufferin-Caledon—this is a government that's committed, particularly through our Moving Ontario Forward plan, to make sure that we keep moving forward, keep building the province up, and keep improving the quality of life for the people of Ontario and building a strong economy.

I look forward to ongoing discussions on Highway 10, and I thank the member for her question today.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this year, the Liberals' cash-for-access practices were exposed and criticized for repeatedly offering exclusive access to cabinet ministers at big-ticket political fundraisers. Yesterday, the government—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yesterday, the government tabled amendments to its political fundraising bill that could further entrench cash-for-access while driving it underground. The amendments prevent MPPs from attending \$20 barbecues and corn roast fundraisers, but the amendments do not prevent a cabinet minister from "soliciting contributions by mail, telephone, electronic communication or other means."

Why did the Premier include a loophole that she could drive a truck full of Hydro One private investors through?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader and Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I find the question very odd because I had the opportunity to personally walk through a technical briefing with the member opposite who asked the question, and the member from the PC caucus, as well, and very clearly articulated the very strong measures that we have put in place through Bill 2.

I think it's worth repeating: We are putting a ban on corporate and union donations. We are putting a very strict limit on the maximum contribution an individual can give. We are also going a step further by making sure that elected representatives, like MPPs, and those who are seeking office are not able to attend fundraising events, and we are making sure the riding associations get subsidies for that.

I think the rules are very clear. Clearly, the NDP does not support these rules and they want dinners like the Vision Dinner to continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Bill 2 and the amendments fundamentally do not address the conflict of interest. This is a classic bait and switch. With these amendments, sure, the Premier must piously avoid attending her riding association's annual \$20 potluck fundraiser, but she can still pick up the phone, personally call every deep-pocketed donor in her Rolodex and hit them up for thousands of dollars, with all of this happening outside of public scrutiny. In fact, she'll have more time to do it because she doesn't have to show up at the fundraiser, and nothing in these amendments—nothing—prevents chiefs of staff or other influential government staffers from doing the same.

When does this Premier think she will get serious about truly banning cash-for-access in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, it is rich. It is so rich. It is \$19,950-per-table rich for that member to talk about cash for access. I wonder where she's going to be on Thursday, November 17, 2016, for her leader's Vision Dinner, where you can get a table with Andrea Horwath for only \$19,950.

I want to know how many people from her riding could actually afford to be at that dinner. I want to know who she's sitting with and what kinds of promises she's making at that dinner.

Speaker, we are putting some of the most stringent limitations on how fundraising is to be done in the province of Ontario. If the NDP does not support those changes, they should come out and just say it.

Interjections.

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

Public infrastructure is relied upon by millions of Ontarians for everything from transportation to clean, safe drinking water. I know that our government has committed to a historic infrastructure investment of \$160 billion over 12 years for many infrastructure projects across this province, and there are currently many projects under way and planned for my own riding of Davenport, such as the Crosstown LRT, the Davenport Diamond guideway, expansions of the West Toronto Railpath and plans for a Bloor-Lansdowne GO station.

I also know that the federal government has committed to its own extensive infrastructure program, which supports and supplements the investments made by provinces such as Ontario.

The minister's mandate letter tasks him with leading the province's negotiations with the federal government on new infrastructure agreements. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please elaborate on the work that he has been doing to build effective partnerships that yield results for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Davenport for the question.

Our government recognizes the critical importance of investing in infrastructure. In fact, we're investing in every riding across this province. That is why our government is making the largest public infrastructure investment in the province's history, one that will stimulate economic growth and sustain over 110,000 jobs per year.

We also recognize the importance of working with other levels of government to deliver on important projects. We are working with the federal government to shape a productive partnership, one that supports our shared infrastructure priorities.

Just this past summer, Ontario signed two important bilateral agreements with the federal government. These committed to over \$4 billion in federal, provincial and municipal funding for our province's infrastructure priorities. Speaker, every constituency in the province will benefit from these programs almost immediately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thanks to the minister for his response. I'm so glad to hear that our government is working closely with his federal counterparts to advance the infrastructure priorities of Ontario's municipalities.

I know that ridings across the province, including my riding of Davenport, will benefit from the \$160 billion in provincial investments and \$60 billion in new federal investments in infrastructure over the next 10 years. That means broader access to public transit, important repairs to sewer systems, drains and pipes, and more hospitals and schools for Ontarians in all corners of the province.

It is encouraging to know that the federal government shares our desire to build Ontario up by investing in infrastructure that creates jobs and stimulates growth. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please elaborate on the efforts he will make to ensure federal infrastructure funding in the future?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We are committed to working with our federal partners on the design of the next stage

of funding for infrastructure and we will continue to collaborate with them.

Our colleagues in Quebec share our commitment to an efficient and successful next phase of federal funding. That is why last week, at a joint cabinet meeting, we announced that Ontario and Quebec will be jointly advocating for a federal infrastructure program that is flexible and formula-based. We are pushing for the programs to be proportional to provincial populations and compatible with our existing long-term infrastructure plans.

1200

Speaker, infrastructure spending fuels economic growth and enhances our quality of life, and those goals are best served by working together.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Premier: Last Friday, I heard the Minister of Energy on CFRA, and he could not have sounded more smug promoting the new power deal with Quebec as a great savings for ratepayers. But he slipped up and quoted a 10-cent savings. The host was relentless: Was it 10 cents per day, per hour, per kilowatt or per household? But the minister's masterful dipping and diving finally ran the clock out with no answer. The Premier would have scored him a perfect 10.

On Monday, she seemed unaware that questions about the Quebec deal were being asked. Will the Premier tell us today if she is aware of the sheer magnitude of Ontarians' electricity bills or does she believe that 10 cents a month should be called "relief" or "just another slap in the face"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Economic Development and Growth is going to want to comment in the supplementary. But it seems to me that for some time, there have been calls from members in this House from both opposition parties that we should be doing more to find agreements with Quebec, that Ontario and Quebec should be working together to get that clean power at a good price for the people of Ontario.

That's exactly what we've done. This is a landmark, seven-year deal. It will help make electricity in Ontario more affordable, clean and reliable. It's two terawatts of power, and that's enough power to power the city of Kitchener for a year. The agreement will reduce electricity system costs for consumers by \$70 million, \$10 million for seven years.

It's a good deal for Ontario, it's a good deal for Quebec and it's a good deal for the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Back to the Premier: The Premier thinks that the \$37 billion Ontarians overpaid for electricity was worth it, and that the additional \$133 billion they'll overpay by 2030 is worth it.

Let me tell her about my constituent Mary. She's been battling cancer for four years. Then a billing problem results in a \$15,000 hydro bill. Her family's not eligible for social help. She can't afford any more bills. She can't afford her food or even a phone for her to keep in touch

with her doctor. The family is now at the end of their rope, with electricity rates that have quadrupled over the last 13 years. They simply are too high.

Could the Premier explain, in light of her spin with the Quebec deal, what she would tell Mary about handing her a measly dime?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Premier, the Minister of Energy and all of us have been very clear on this side of the House that we care about those residents that are struggling with their energy bills. That's why we're reducing their bills by 8%, something that the members opposite just sniff at. That's why we're reducing the bills of those in remote and rural areas by 20%, something the members opposite think isn't substantial enough. A \$70-million savings to the system, with regard to the Ontario-Quebec agreement, is \$70 million out of our system that residents don't have to pay. You sniff at that. We've suspended the second round of the large renewable procurement process. You criticized us for doing that. That's \$3.8 billion in savings. Reducing the feed-in tariff prices: That saved \$1.9 billion. Again, the members opposite said, "That's not good enough." We removed the debt retirement charge; that's \$5 on every bill.

I have a list of a dozen items, Mr. Speaker. Each and every one of them they opposed. Each and every one of them, we think, is really making a substantial difference to the lives of Ontarians.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question's to the Premier. The Premier has said that the Hydro One proceeds will be used to build infrastructure or to pay down the \$25-billion electricity sector debt. According to public accounts, the Hydro One cash didn't pay for any infrastructure last year. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance didn't deny that, but he said that "a good portion of that has gone to pay down the debt."

Well, the Hydro One cash did not pay down any of the electricity sector debt either. Public accounts show that last year \$3.8 billion came in from the Hydro One sale and just sat there. Why wasn't the electricity sector debt paid down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: All right, here we go again. We had an initial IPO of Hydro One. We established \$1.9 billion in gross proceeds; \$1.1 billion was for book value. The net proceeds of the deferred tax benefit—almost \$3 billion—went into the Trillium Trust. That's what has happened.

In the second round of the offering, again, \$1.3 billion of the book value was established; another \$0.8 billion went into the Trillium Trust as part of the proceeds. It is being allocated to the Trillium Trust that was established specifically for the purposes of ensuring that the funds received and the deferred tax benefit that was established

go into the trust and get reinvested into infrastructure as we move forward.

It's as simple as that. It's what we said we would do, and it's what is being done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The public accounts show that about \$3.8 billion in Hydro One cash came in last year that was supposed to pay down the hydro debt, but it didn't do that. The public accounts show the money sitting on the books, not paying down any debt at all. Meanwhile, Ontario businesses are paying \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges to service this hydro debt that the government has failed to pay down.

Since the Hydro One cash is not being used to actually pay for infrastructure, and since it's not being used to reduce the Hydro debt, what exactly is the government using the money for?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'll reiterate: The cash used that has been garnered from the broadening of this ownership—that was about \$2.4 billion—was used to pay down debt; \$2.4 billion is being used to pay down debt. The rest of the allocation, which is about \$3.6 billion from these transactions, is being allocated to the Trillium Trust. As the flow-through occurs and as the items are materialized and reconciled as necessary through the process, that is what will happen.

Furthermore, we're then using the proceeds built into the Trillium Trust to invest in transit, to invest in infrastructure, to invest in new assets that generate greater returns for the province of Ontario and for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science. Our government is committed to supporting an innovation ecosystem that will help young entrepreneurs succeed in today's knowledge-based economy. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, where we have a booming tech sector, that is great news. In Ontario, we are continuing to find new, innovative ways to help people move their ideas and discoveries into the competitive market economy.

In 2015, the Carbon XPRIZE was launched. It's an extremely successful competition designed to spark innovation to combat climate change. Last week, the Carbon XPRIZE competition announced the teams that would be going to the semi-finals, and 12 of those teams are Canadian. This government has made certain that Ontario is at the forefront of climate-change-fighting technologies, and I know that the minister has personally seen to that.

Could the minister please tell this House more about this competition?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for that very good question. The Carbon XPRIZE is an extremely exciting initiative that seeks to address global CO₂ emissions by creating innovative solutions to convert CO₂ from a liability into an asset. Investing in the fight against climate change is

part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in the province of Ontario in their everyday lives.

Through the Ontario Centres of Excellence, Mr. Speaker, my ministry has invested over \$2.4 million to support our teams competing in this exciting challenge. Teams will be competing for a \$20-million prize. Of the 47 Carbon XPRIZE teams, I am proud to announce that three Ontario-based teams have made it to the semi-final round. This is a huge victory for Ontario and all of our innovators.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for the answer. The need to curb CO₂ emissions and to fight the effects of greenhouse gases is not only an important issue for environmental reasons, but it is a rapidly growing business sector with great potential. Just yesterday, while subbing on the estimates committee, our energy minister spoke at length about that.

1210

Ontario has the opportunity to be a leader in this sector. Could the minister please tell us about the clean technology sector and what projects the team selected for Carbon XPRIZE are working on? I know that the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre will be very interested in this news as it concerns many of them who are choosing to pursue careers in the environmental and clean technology sector.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her advocacy for science, research and innovation, particularly in her riding in the Kitchener and Waterloo area.

I'm sure that the House will be delighted to know Ontario's clean technology sector is made up of 3,000 firms employing 65,000 people, and is worth an estimated \$8 billion in annual revenue and \$1 billion in export earnings.

I would be happy to tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the teams participating in Carbon XPRIZE: CERT, a team that is using natural gas by-products to produce formic acid; Pond Technologies, a team producing biodiesel and solid biofuel; and Tandem Technical, a team producing health supplements, toothpaste, paints and fertilizer.

All teams have excellent ideas that I am sure will find a way to make their impact on earth and a clean earth for future generations.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, yesterday the Environmental Commissioner informed us that Ontario's moose populations have declined by 20% over the last decade and by as much as 60% in areas such as Cochrane.

The report further revealed that your ministry "often fails to use its tools to provide effective conservation for Ontario's species."

This minister's refusal to release details on spending of the special purpose account and the failing of the conservation of Ontario's wildlife raises hunters' and

anglers' suspicions of mismanagement. Will the minister ease those suspicions and release details of the special purpose account today?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I thank the member for his question today. Certainly, we thank the Environmental Commissioner for her report yesterday on the state of our moose population. I wanted to address that first and I'll address the other in the supplementary, if I may.

Moose hold an important place in our province. It's an iconic and very important part of Ontario's biodiversity. My ministry has been working for some years on the declining moose population throughout North America. We know that in parts of Manitoba and Minnesota, those moose hunts have been cancelled. We know about the decline here. There are various reasons for that, notwithstanding climate change and other issues.

We have recently completed the second phase of Ontario's Moose Project, to continue discussions regarding it and researching to ensure sustainability.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: We would have known about declining moose populations over five years ago if your government actually did its job and reviewed how the moose population was doing.

The special purpose account is to be used for the management of wildlife and fish populations. However, we saw, in information received in the 2011-12 years, that the ministry spent the money outside the purpose of the fund. They cheated hunters and anglers. The special purpose fund should not be used for housekeeping, cleaning services or psychologists.

The Environmental Commissioner's recent report said, "The MNRF is making critical decisions with one eye closed, and gambling with Ontario's moose populations."

Will the minister stop gambling on our wildlife, be open and transparent, and show hunters and anglers how they are spending the money in the special purpose account?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the opportunity to correct some misinformation about our Fish and Wildlife Program: 100% of our fishing and hunting revenue from licences is supporting fish and wildlife management across Ontario. This fund supports a number of fishing and hunting activities, such as stocking almost eight million fish a year in all lakes across Ontario; the community fish hatchery program; having conservation officers enforce the rules; and monitoring, researching and conducting wildlife population studies, such as flying over all our northern wildlife management units to track the moose population. This fund supports staff, such as biologists, conservation officers and resource technicians. These staff are boots on the ground. These staff, like all public servants, are entitled to receive a fair wage and health benefits.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. This week, news broke that a mother in Mississauga was

forced to abandon her 21-year-old son with autism because she could not access appropriate supports for him. She has struggled for years trying to get access to services, and this government has completely failed this family and other families across the province. It just isn't right that families are living in crisis.

Families of children with special needs should be able to raise their own children. As a mother, I can't even imagine what this family is going through. Having to give up their child is absolutely devastating. Families trying to access supports for adults with developmental disabilities have been in crisis for years, and the Ombudsman made that perfectly clear.

Will the Premier commit to providing supports for children with autism and families instead of putting them in crisis and tearing them apart?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Although I cannot comment on the specific case, I'd like to say that, of course, I have the greatest respect for those family members, parents and caregivers who look after those with developmental disabilities.

There are times when those challenges, looking after individuals perhaps with behavioural issues or severe medical issues, can become overwhelming for the family. Because of that, we have put an unprecedented emphasis on looking at these very urgent cases. Developmental service organizations have a consistent approach across the province to these very urgent cases, and we ensure that the appropriate respite or other permanent solutions are found.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

DEFERRED VOTES

PATIENTS FIRST ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX PATIENTS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant diverses lois dans l'intérêt des soins axés sur les patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 41.

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

The division bells rang from 1217 to 1222.

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

On October 19, 2016, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care.

Mrs. Albanese has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Mrs. Albanese's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 49; the nays are 35.

Interruption.

Mr. John Yakabuski: One last time for you, Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Medic.

The ayes being 49, the nays being 35, I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1226 to 1227.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend various Acts in the interests of patient-centred care. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul

Baker, Yvan	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Brown, Patrick	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 24.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill stand for third reading?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So moved.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1230 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would just like to welcome all the wonderful children here in the House today. Welcome to Queen's Park, on both sides of the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD STROKE DAY

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to speak about the importance of World Stroke Day, celebrated each year on October 29. World Stroke Day is a chance to raise awareness, share stories and learn to prevent this illness that affects so many.

Stroke has been, and continues to be, a widespread disease, afflicting over 15 million worldwide each year.

Promoting World Stroke Day is significant because the date has now become a high point for efforts focusing on prevention. This year's theme of World Stroke Day is, "Face the facts: Stroke is treatable."

World Stroke Day serves as a valuable reminder of how important it is that we build on the work done and help people learn what they can do to prevent stroke, recognize the signs and symptoms of a stroke and get treatment quickly.

Living a healthy, active lifestyle, free of tobacco, is the first step towards reducing one's risk of chronic illness.

Although it is a complex disease, stroke is treatable. I urge Ontario residents to take action to drive that awareness and push for better access to stroke treatments.

We in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus join the Ontario Stroke Network and other health partners in helping to improve awareness of prevention techniques and treatment options.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think anyone in this room, anyone in this province, relishes the prospect of freezing in the dark, but certainly, as a result of the ice storm in December 2013, many, many Ontarians had an opportunity to do that. It's one of the consequences of the extreme weather that's brought on by climate change.

In 2009, this government had a report back from an expert panel on adapting to climate change, and one of their recommendations touched on the assessment of risk to the electricity system, recognizing that, increasingly, extreme weather was going to knock out that system.

That recommendation in 2009 was ignored when the government brought forward its Climate Ready adaptation report a few years later. In 2013, when the ice storm struck, it was very clear that the steps necessary to make sure the system was continuing to function hadn't been put in place.

This week, I had a chance to question the Minister of Energy on climate change adaptation. It's clear that that recommendation from the expert panel continues to simply sit on the shelf, and, to the extent that it does, it means that we continue to be at risk either of shivering in the dark or sweltering in a city with no electrical power.

There are real consequences to ignoring climate change. This government is ignoring it. The Liberals have set down a course of action that will bring us into conflict with those threats.

BLOOD DONATION CAMPAIGN

Ms. Harinder Malhi: One in two Canadians is eligible to donate blood but only one in 60 give. This year, Canadian Blood Services launched the 100K New Donor Challenge to donate across the country.

Every November of each year, people of the Sikh faith come from around the world to donate blood to commemorate the memory of the innocent lives lost during

the atrocities of November 1984. It is one of the largest blood donation campaigns in Ontario and in Canada, saving over 113,000 lives. In November of each year, the Sikh community around the globe reaches out and embraces the vision that all humans should live a safe and happy life. The Blood Donation Campaign led by the Sikh community makes you look at history and the future as well. This campaign brings all humans together as one.

With the vision of bringing people together around the globe, the Sikh community first started the Blood Donation Campaign on the lower mainland of British Columbia in 1999. The campaign has now grown across Canada, the USA, Australia and other worldwide locations. The Sikh nation Blood Donation Campaign has globally saved many lives in each of these respective countries.

The Sikh Blood Donation Campaign is part of an effort to raise awareness of the events and the atrocities of 1984 and, at the same time, unite humanity to end such atrocities across the world. The Sikh Blood Donation Campaign embraces Sikh and Ontarian and Canadian values by expressing peace and inviting people around the world to participate in humanitarian campaigns.

This campaign remembers the innocent Sikh victims of the atrocities in November 1984, and in memory of these lives lost in 1984, a moment of silence at 6 p.m. on November 1 is observed every year.

I invite everybody to join the upcoming blood camps in Brampton this weekend.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Last week, I met with a group of concerned Ontario doctors to discuss the constant decline of health care in Scarborough.

Scarborough hospitals have been pushed to a crisis point. Their emergency rooms are overcrowded, and the infrastructure is old and crumbling. They are faced with the growing challenge of how to better serve families with fewer resources and how to better serve patients with fewer staff.

One doctor shared a story about a patient who was brought to the emergency department because he was feeling too weak to walk. His symptoms were vague, but he was sick enough to be admitted to the hospital. There were empty rooms and beds in the emergency department that night, but the patient was told that he could not have them because the hospital could not afford to pay for a nurse to nurse him. Therefore, the patient sat in a chair for more than 20 hours that day.

1310

This is totally unacceptable. People in Scarborough deserve a health care system that actually delivers.

I strongly urge this government to stop neglecting Scarborough's health care needs any longer.

HAIRSTORY

Miss Monique Taylor: Last week, black youth came together to participate in HairStory, a project of the

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. HairStory invites black youth to share their experiences with government services and the challenges that come with being racialized in these systems.

On Monday, I had the privilege of taking part in a listening table where these stories were courageously shared. I hear their call for more understanding about their cultures in all of our systems so that they can feel understood and included.

They spoke of how their social workers didn't have the ability to meet their needs. They expressed the failures of child protection services, which operate as a business from 9 to 5. We all know that the care of our children and youth goes far beyond a 9-to-5 job.

Youth do not have the supports to transition out of care. Our system abandons them. These youth trusted that I and the government would act on these issues. It is the duty of our government to make sure that government services do not discriminate against cultures or ethnicities.

REPUBLIC DAY OF TURKEY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Merhaba. Günaydın. Speaker, Turkey is a dynamic and vibrant nation that straddles the part of Asia called Anatolia and the part of Europe called eastern Thrace. Turkey is both an ancient society and a strong and modern nation.

Alexander the Great governed Turkey, as did Roman emperor Constantine, after whom Istanbul's ancient name of Constantinople arose.

Turkey's history is long, rich and deep. Turkey has drawn enduring lessons in civilization, science, architecture, engineering, religion and military history together to build an empire in its own right. Turkey showed all of the great powers of the 20th century that it would not be interfered with.

The father of modern Turkey is, of course, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who led the new Republic of Turkey that arose from the old Ottoman Empire. We celebrate Republic Day of Turkey on October 29 of each year.

Turkey is a nation whose past has taught it what fights to join and what disputes to stay out of. It is a staunch NATO ally.

These proud, confident people are now a part of Ontario's multicultural fabric. We join with our Turkish Canadian friends, neighbours, co-workers and our Ontario family to celebrate Republic Day of Turkey—I am joined by my colleague the Honourable Reza Moridi—and also to thank our Ontarians of Turkish descent and their families for helping to build today's and tomorrow's modern Ontario.

REPUBLIC DAY OF TURKEY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise in the House today to celebrate the Turkish republic. The Republic of Turkey was founded by the great Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on October 29, 1923.

The young republic emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. After that war, Allied forces divided and occupied Turkey. Atatürk was a brilliant military leader who mustered the Turkish forces and liberated his country in 1922 in the War of Independence.

In 1923, Atatürk established Turkey as a secular, democratic state. It was the first democracy in the Middle East. Atatürk enacted many progressive reforms, which brought the Turkish people out of superstition and tyranny and into the 20th century. He promoted the use of an elegant new alphabet for the Turkish language, and favoured clear and precise expression. Atatürk ensured equality for men and women. He promoted higher education and international trade.

Since then, the modern Turkish republic has been a beacon of secularism and democracy in the Middle East and is one of Canada's greatest allies.

I hope you will all join me in celebrating 93 years of the Turkish republic.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Paul Miller: As the holiday season approaches, I want to speak about our neighbours and constituents who do not have enough to eat. No one in this province should be going hungry, but inadequate social assistance rates perpetuate poverty and hunger. This is why the need for food banks persists in our province and is going up. If you have to pay rent and bills, buy clothing and feed yourself on \$706 a month, it's almost inevitable that you will have to turn to food banks for help.

The number of children in Hamilton needing emergency food assistance is actually going up. According to the 2016 HungerCount, it has increased by 5% this year. We actually have 6,000 kids going to school hungry.

There are excellent food banks in Hamilton, and one of the main channels for donations is through Hamilton Food Share. Hamilton Food Share provides much-needed food supplies and short-term storage to local food banks and hot meal programs.

I'd like to thank and acknowledge Hamilton Food Share, their community partners and Hamilton's local food banks for everything they do for our neighbours in need. I encourage all of us, MPPs and citizens, to do our utmost to reduce hunger in this province, both through legislative action here and through directly supporting emergency food assistance programs.

RIDING OF ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I would like to share with this House some of the remarkable developments going on in the riding of Etobicoke North because of the extraordinary ambition, dedication, perseverance and long-suffering of the member of Etobicoke North: \$1.7-billion worth of development in the riding.

We have a \$90-million student facility at Humber College, which is really an architectural jewel. We have

eight new stops—count them, Speaker—eight new stops on the Finch LRT: Humber College, Highway 27, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion, Stevenson, Kipling, Islington. This in itself is a \$1.2-billion development.

And most especially, perhaps, and just recently, a \$358-million upgrade, renovation and redesign quadrupling the footprint of Etobicoke General Hospital. Part of it is a four-storey wing, 250,000 square feet, a larger state-of-the-art emergency department, critical care and intensive care units, maternal-newborn birthing suites, a new ambulatory procedures unit, and cardiorespiratory and neurodiagnostic services. As was said on the day of the opening, it is a monumental day for the Osler health care system, in particular Etobicoke General.

All of this is great news for our residents—whether it's for health care, for transportation, for building the future education of our province—at Humber College, the Finch LRT, as well as at Etobicoke General Hospital.

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

APPOINTMENT OF CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have a comment to make that I'm sure all of us will be quite excited about.

I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing Mr. Todd Decker as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly effective November 1, 2016.

Congratulations, sir.

If you have any questions, ask the Clerk.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REMEMBRANCE WEEK ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DU SOUVENIR

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to proclaim Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day /
Projet de loi 55, Loi proclamant la semaine du Souvenir et prévoyant l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: The bill expands the scope of the Remembrance Day Observance Act, 1997, to proclaim the week preceding Remembrance Day in each year as Remembrance Week.

I want to very much thank the co-sponsors of this bill from the other two parties: the Liberal member from

Ottawa South, MPP John Fraser, and the NDP member from Parkdale–High Park, MPP Cheri DiNovo.

Thank you very much for a nonpartisan effort to bring in Remembrance Week in Ontario.

1320

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Whereas for all Ontarians—no matter who they are, or where they live—the health of their family comes first, and it should come first for the government of Ontario;

“Whereas 1,200 nurses have been fired since January 2015;

“Whereas hospital beds are being closed across Ontario; and

“Whereas hospital budgets have been frozen for four years, and increases this year will not keep up with inflation or a growing population;

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

“Stop the cuts to hospitals, and ensure that, at a minimum, hospital funding keeps up with the growing costs of inflation and population growth, each and every year.”

I agree, I'm going to sign it and give it to Cooper to be delivered to the table.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I also have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate on property taxes is widely acknowledged as contributing to the higher number of empty neighbourhood retail storefronts (i.e., residential/condominium above a commercial space) and reduced economic activity in our community; and

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate precludes short-term and flexible leases, which have been proven to revitalize neighbourhood commercial strips by providing a more accessible entry point and fostering entrepreneurship; and

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate is widely acknowledged as a contributor to the lack of interest or necessity among landlords in lowering commercial lease rates and/or improving commercial properties; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto, in the course of public hearings in 2015, formally requested the province of Ontario amend the vacancy unit rebate provision ‘for commercial and industrial properties, in order to enable the city to establish graduated vacant unit rebates that will induce and incent owners and tenants to meet eligibility criteria that align with the city’s economic growth and job creation objectives’; and

“Whereas there are millions of dollars in property tax revenue being lost that could help alleviate problems of homelessness, food security and other local issues; and

“Whereas the decision to amend or end the vacant unit rebate in our community ultimately requires the province of Ontario to amend the City of Toronto Act;

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

“That the province of Ontario amend the City of Toronto Act, granting the city of Toronto the power to delineate a specific category for neighbourhood retail commercial properties, and allowing them to set, amend and/or eliminate the vacant unit tax rebate for this category.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and will leave it with page Elisabeth.

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas Ontario has amongst the highest hydro rates in North America;

“Whereas electricity prices are expected to keep rising;

“Whereas the Liberal government has created the hydro crisis by signing lucrative contracts for unnecessary energy;

“Whereas Liberal mismanagement has left Ontario’s electricity system unaffordable and unreliable;

“Whereas the proposed hydro rebate is merely a band-aid solution; and

“Whereas the rebate is simply too little and too late;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to: stop signing contracts for energy that the province will sell at a loss; and stop selling any further shares in Hydro One.”

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to read this petition on behalf of Pat Forbes from London, who signed the petition for better mental health services.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

“Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

“Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

“Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

“Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

“Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2016, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2016, which:

“(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

“(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

“(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition and give it to page Surya to deliver.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here supporting my private member’s bill, which we will have a chance to hear more about soon.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many companies are moving to or have already implemented new policies applying expiry timelines to rewards points collected under their programs; and

“Whereas such an action is unreasonably punitive to consumers; and

“Whereas consumers are effectively exchanging personal information in return for access to these rewards programs in a transaction-like exchange;

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

“To protect consumers by amending the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to prohibit the expiry of rewards points, and to credit them back to accounts where expiry has occurred.”

I, of course, agree with this petition and sign it to bring to the table, leaving it with Samantha.

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world’s highest subsidies for solar power; and

“Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer’s hydro bill; and

“Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario’s residents, especially those on fixed incomes; and

“Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

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

“To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and give it to page Paige.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

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

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) euthanizes animals in its care using disease outbreaks as justification instead of treating the animals;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) euthanizes animals in its care using dogfighting as justification instead of adopting out and “retraining the dogs;

“Whereas the Premier and minister of community safety and corrections refuse to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA despite them receiving government funding;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring government oversight of the OSPCA.”

I agree, I’m going to sign this and give it to page Paige to be delivered to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario has amongst the highest hydro rates in North America;

“Whereas electricity prices are expected to keep rising;

“Whereas the Liberal government has created the hydro crisis by signing lucrative contracts for unnecessary energy;

“Whereas Liberal mismanagement has left Ontario’s electricity system unaffordable and unreliable;

“Whereas the proposed hydro rebate is merely a band-aid solution; and

“Whereas the rebate is simply too little and too late;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to: stop signing contracts for energy that the province will sell at a loss; and stop selling any further shares in Hydro One.”

I support this petition and send it down to the table with page Nicolas.

1330

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

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

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that has been signed by more than 2,000 of my constituents. I’m presenting them as they come in; they’re still coming in. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale

of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

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

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I agree with this petition and I have also signed it.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

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

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

"Whereas Toronto's city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board's jurisdiction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

"Further, that the government pass Bill 5, the Respect for Municipalities Act, so that the Ontario Municipal Board will no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto."

I agree with this, sign it and give it to Cooper to be delivered to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a growing energy affordability crisis in Ontario;

"Whereas the"—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, you know the rules. When I stand, you will sit.

I'm listening to the point of order from the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Although I don't have good enough eyesight to read it from here, that seriously looks to me like a prop, and I think the member should know better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Before I'm going to rule on the point of order, I'm going to—because I understand that the member has not certified his petition, I'm going to get him to get it certified before he reads it to the chamber.

I'm going to recognize the member from London—Fanshawe to read her petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker.

"Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

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

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure" all "hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

Speaker, I sign this petition and give it to page Paige to deliver to the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTING REWARDS POINTS ACT (CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PRÉSERVATION DES POINTS DE RÉCOMPENSE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Mr. Potts moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 47, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to rewards points / Projet de loi

47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui a trait aux points de récompense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand in the House today on my private member's bill, Bill 47, the Protecting Rewards Points Act. This falls in the theme that I think I've established over my first two years here in the House of bringing forward private member's bills that address critical issues for ordinary Ontarians.

My first bill, as you'll recall, Speaker, was the tipping bill. I'd like to give credit to the member opposite whose riding I successfully won two years ago, who introduced the tipping bill three times, which effectively stopped restaurant owners who didn't perform services from taking tips from their employees. Although when the bill first came out it was a simple line to that effect, it was our government, through committee, that brought forward the amendments that made it the fulsome bill that I promised I would bring forward if I were elected. Having been elected, I brought it forward, and it successfully passed.

I then followed that bill up with the daycare wait-list fees act. Essentially, that bill said to people who wanted to put their children on wait-lists for daycare that the daycare owner could not charge a fee for that. I found constituents who were putting their child on four or five wait-lists for daycares, and the result of that, at \$100 or \$150 per child, was an extremely onerous burden—to have a wait-list fee that was non-refundable—and there wasn't very much of a transparent process for ensuring where you were on that list. So I brought that bill forward, and we were able to change that regulation and have some success.

This follows up on the same theme, the theme being protecting consumers who have entered into a consumer agreement with a supplier of goods or services in order to buy certain goods in exchange for loyalty reward points, points that they anticipate that sometime in the future they can exchange for goods or services. If passed, what this bill will do is prohibit a company from essentially putting a term in their consumer agreement that will allow for those points to expire at some point in the future.

If I go to the bill specifically, we are putting in a new section under the Consumer Protection Act, adding a new section to "consumer agreement." For our purposes, in the section "consumer agreement," under (b), "rewards points are provided to the consumer when he or she purchases specified goods or services or otherwise acts in a manner specified in the agreement...."

1340

So here, we're going to codify that in the consumer agreement, we're going to recognize that loyalty reward points have a currency.

This is essentially what we did in 2007, under the previous administration under Premier McGuinty. We

codified that a gift card, where someone actually pays money into a gift card in order to receive goods or services—they were being set to expire at a certain period of time. We changed the Consumer Protection Act in 2007 to protect the investments that consumers made in gift cards so that they would not expire. We're essentially doing the same here now, by recognizing that loyalty reward points are pretty much the same thing as a gift card. They're the same, because they do have currency. When someone goes out and purchases goods or services and receives rewards, there's an expectation that they could be transferred for value-added goods or services. And that's no different than a gift card.

In fact, as you know, most of us, when we have our Aeroplan cards or Shoppers Drug Mart card—it is a nice piece of plastic—we know that if we call up, if we go to the website, it will show that it has a certain amount of attached value to it.

It's really important, I think, that we are making this step, because we brought the bill in in 2007 to prevent gift cards—suddenly, we realized there was a gaping hole with respect to loyalty reward points. So I'm delighted to be able to bring this bill forward in order to protect consumers who have acquired loyalty reward points.

We needed to define "rewards points," which we do in section 1 of the act by adding the following definition: "rewards points" means, subject to the regulations, points provided to a consumer under a consumer agreement that can be exchanged for money, goods or services...."

As a common-sense definition, you can see—there's not a person out there who has acquired points and doesn't realize that that's what they expected back in return. So I'm delighted to be able to bring this forward.

It's also anticipated, although there's not specific language in the bill—but I think it's implied and anticipated: It's not only the expiry that we're concerned about. People accumulate points, and loyalty point groups are very good at promoting their loyalty points by saying, "You'll earn extra points, double the points," for a certain-value purchase; that if you go to this restaurant or this hotel, there's an opportunity that they will encourage you to continue using their points to get more points for the same amount of expenditures you might otherwise have made. But on the flip side, what we're often seeing is that people who are offering up reward points are actually diminishing the value of that point by changing—significantly, in some cases—the number of points that you need to exchange for a certain good or service.

I'm hoping, as we go forward into committee with this, we can find the right language through discussions with stakeholders, consumer groups and individuals, to find some language which would protect the consumer from having a whack of points that suddenly have half or a quarter of the value that they thought was there.

I've seen news stories of people who were saving up for years and years to go on a specific trip. Maybe it's an exotic trip on a cruise down in the Bahamas. But as they go to make the purchase, suddenly the purchase has a

higher point count attached to it. So they go back and they wait. They just postpone their trip, and they go get more points. When they show up again to make the purchase, once again there it is: The price has gone up, and they can't get in. So we want to find language which will protect the diminution of the value of the points as they move forward.

The same issue, I think, applies to how you redeem the points. We've all had, I'm sure, circumstances when we've tried to redeem value points, let's say, for a flight. You go onto the website and there are no seats available. It used to be that you could get the seats if you did it two or three months in advance or even two or three weeks in advance, but on some loyalty point cards, it's getting harder and harder to find open seats. There's a restriction. We want to fix that. That, I think, will be applied in language that we'll try to find as we go forward into committee.

There's an example I like to use of my mother. My mother—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Has this got something to do with an umbrella? Probably. I would never knowingly bring a prop into the Legislature. Thank you for that distraction from my time.

My wonderful mother, Dawn Potts, is now 88 years old. About three years ago, she was going to go back to England to visit with cousins she had there. My mother was born in Bristol, and she wanted to go back to visit. She has, over the years, accumulated a significant number of points, and she wanted to use them. I was assisting her. This is three months before she wanted to leave.

We were trying to get her a direct flight from Toronto to Gatwick. She's 88 now; she was 85 at the time. She wants a direct flight. It's obvious. You don't want to sit in LaGuardia or Kennedy airport waiting four or five hours at that age to get onto the next leg of your journey; you want to go directly. So we were able to find a direct flight to Gatwick or to Heathrow, but coming back, in every scenario we looked at, you had to have a stopover delay of two or three hours. Now, that wasn't the case when she went over six years earlier. We were easily able to get her a direct flight there and a direct flight back. So I think we have to find language that will clearly eliminate the opportunity to make it hard to redeem those points.

I know that some loyalty point providers have gone out of their way to find new ways of promoting that if you come to their system, by showing that there are no barriers to their seats, it's easy to get on. They're using that as a marketing campaign, which actually makes the other loyalty point rewards groups look bad. I'm hoping we can continue to encourage that kind of behaviour.

The other piece that I want to talk about here, Speaker, is that we are going to backdate the implementation of this bill to October 1, 2016. Should the bill get passed, go through committee stage and be adopted but not receive royal assent until after January 1, for instance, where a

major provider of loyalty points has indicated that they anticipate that anyone who has accumulated points that are over five years old are going to drop off or going to expire, we're sending the signal right now that we will backdate to October 1, 2016, so that they will have to reimburse the accounts of those people who would have lost points.

I think I'm actually doing these loyalty point card companies a favour, because when Aeroplan first announced that they were going to have an expiry, and their expiry was seven years—they announced it a number of years ago—there was an extremely potent consumer backlash against it, and, to their credit, they withdrew. They withdrew in the face of massive lawsuits—what do you call them?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Class-action lawsuits.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Class-action lawsuits. Thank you.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you; I could use that. They withdrew. The indication was very clear that they probably were going to lose these class action lawsuits. So I think I'm doing them a favour by putting this bill forward, because they will recognize that now that it's in law, it will be hard for them to do this.

But I also think we're taking leadership in the country by doing this. Most of these reward point companies operate across the country, they're national programs, and we in Ontario are taking leadership as being the first jurisdiction in Canada to prohibit the expiration of loyalty rewards points. And Ontario being a significant consumer, with a sizeable portion of the people who are using these reward points across the country, I'm fairly confident that they will want to standardize their rules across the country.

I know that people are using these points for a whole raft of good things, whether it's cash redemptions at a local grocery store or getting gasoline. A few years ago, we passed the opportunity for students who have debt with the Ontario Student Assistance Plan to cash in reward points to pay down student debt. Something in the order of 35,000 points would buy them a \$250 credit against their OSAP loan. Those are the kinds of really inventive ways—so that if companies are feeling they have too much liability, too many points out there and they can't do their financial planning, they need to be offering consumers opportunities and deals so that they can expire the points by having people use them. It can't be a unilateral action. It has to be something done with consent. Speaker, loyalty shouldn't have an expiry date.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm very proud to rise today on behalf of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to speak to Bill 47, the Protecting Rewards Points Act. Speaker, consumers across the province treasure their reward points and appreciate the opportunity to claim a large reward or a special vacation trip. It's a bit like winning the lottery. I have friends, relatives and family members that use these, and they're quite happy

to use them. I think it's time that the government steps up and takes some steps to protect them.

1350

But I'm a little nervous, and I'm sure this is not the intention of the member from Beaches–East York, but when we see the government get involved in some of these programs, we don't always get what we want. So we are a bit concerned. We see people calling up my office with that concern, a small business saying, "I use Air Miles and I'm a little worried. I see the government tinkering." That has spelled some problems in the past. So you can see that, although it's a good idea, they're just a little worried that the Liberal Party may screw things up. There are a lot of concerns here.

I worry about this too, because we've seen many times the Liberal Party seemingly making some very constructive changes, some popular changes, and then we find out in the details that it's not exactly what we were told. You don't have to go back very far when we found out about the ticket prices that were being protected, and now we see people reselling tickets for huge profits. I know that in that case there was a donation made back to the party, but I don't think that's the case here. But there are always those concerns, because we constantly get caught—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. You know the rules, Minister. Minister of Children and Youth Services, we don't talk across. We have to be respectful.

I'll return to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: And I know they got caught and there was some legislation before us that we thought would have handled this, but that's something that didn't play out either.

Anyway, we're looking, and there is definitely some concern out there. I try to reassure people to give them a chance. This may be it. I know that the member opposite has a little problem with an umbrella that we're working on—you know, people in the rain. But anyway, that's just an indication.

It's the same old tactics, but they're under the looking glass now, and hopefully we'll be able to work through this. I know we have a chance through amendments, so we'll be watching what goes on. In committee this week it's tough, because we aren't hearing a word from the Liberal Party during committee. It's sometimes hard to really figure out what some of the amendments are when they do come up. Sometimes we don't even see the amendments.

But we're working with them and we're hoping that maybe this will be different, because again, consumer protection is very important. That's why we're all here. I hope sometimes when we have the same intentions, we're looking out for our own constituents and not just ourselves, because we don't want to have legislation where consumers lose. We don't want legislation where we see whatever plan it is—I know I haven't cashed any in, but I have points. I don't want to see the asterisk at the bottom of the page that says, "Not applicable to Ontario residents." That's our worry here.

We'll be watching what goes on here. We hope that they can carry through on this and do a good job. We'll be looking forward to seeing it in committee.

Thank you, Speaker. I know there are other members who want to speak.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to stand. Right off the bat, of course, we in the New Democratic Party are going to support this bill.

I want to tell a little story about my son. We all tell stories about our families in this place. Trust me, this is not a paid political announcement. The money in our household flows from us to him, not the other way around, but he does own his own coffee shop. It's called Capital Espresso; it's at Queen and Dunn. If anybody wants to turn up there, I'm sure he'd be happy to see you. I know a number of our press gallery make it a routine.

When he started his coffee shop some five years ago with a partner, instead of a loyalty card, which is pretty common in coffee shops in some chains, he and his partner started what they called a disloyalty card. With this card, if you went to the indie coffee shops—not the big chains, but the indie coffee shops around Toronto—and you got five coffees from five different indie coffee shops, any one of those would give you a coffee for free. Come on. This is brilliant—I have to say that—and it got them a lot of press as well. I'm just telling you that story because it's cute. It's a disloyalty card. They don't do it anymore. They don't have to. Things are going swimmingly.

To get back to the loyalty card business, of course: There are a lot of programs out there. Let's face it; I'm a fan of marketing. I did have a business background—ministry, yes, but business as well. Whoever came up with the first loyalty plan—clearly, this must be studied by MBA students everywhere. Let's call it what it is: It's brilliant marketing. And sometimes it's actually good for the consumer. Certainly, I've benefited. I know that any members here who are out of town, who fly a great deal on certain airlines, also benefit from air plan points. I do, and I appreciate that. But sometimes it's not so good, and here's where we, as legislators, do need to weigh in on behalf of our constituents.

I'm not going to mention names here, but one particular loyalty card that I had where air miles are concerned, I didn't cash in, didn't notice, used it when it was applicable, and 13 years later, all of the points I used and all the places I used it were—I think I cashed it in for a free massage. After 13 years of saving up points—give me a break. Whereas others, if you get a point for every dollar or whatever—and especially when I was in business. And I know small business. This is one of the ways in which small businesses sometimes are able to actually pay for things like trips. If you're putting your billings through your cards, you're actually amassing a fair number of points, and those accrue to you. So in that case, in business—yes, absolutely. My business frequent-flyer points paid for whatever trips we took during my years in

business, and that was a very good thing. So different programs have different results.

My advice to marketers in companies would be this: If you are a company that offers points, yes, it absolutely is a lure; it absolutely gets people to use your services and your card, but if they don't deliver at the other end—either by expiry dates that are in this fine print that you don't note or they simply don't give you much back for all of the loyalty you spend on their product—it's going to work the opposite way. It's going to become to become a disloyalty card like my son's.

I can tell you that for one particular hotel chain, which I will not name—I kept going back to the same hotel, kept using the same card, and, again, when I wanted to actually cash in on the points, I didn't get much for it for all the times I spent there. Will I use that hotel again? No. In fact, I'll stay away from that hotel in the future. Really, what's the point? It becomes a disloyalty card.

So from a purely business point of view, I'd say to those people who are using this as a marketing tool, it's all well and good, but make sure your customers will appreciate it. Certainly, expiry dates are a problem and they shouldn't exist.

The member from Beaches—East York mentioned the gift card scenario. We supported that, too, when it came through—that there shouldn't be expiry dates on gift cards. But here's another caveat: Unless you enforce what we pass here, it doesn't have a lot of bearing. I can tell you, many times I've received gift cards or given gift cards or seen gift cards where there are still expiry dates on them, despite the fact that we passed that legislation here, so I've had to educate business owners and consumers, saying, "You can't do this."

Part of me wonders what kind of enforcement there will be; what kind of enforcement power do we even have in this place to make this an actual fact? So I'd be interested, in the last two minutes—perhaps somebody can really expand on this in terms of, even if we pass this, even if it goes to committee, even if it does the route, how is this ever going to be enforced, and what will happen if people just blatantly thumb their noses at this law and do the opposite? For sure, on the gift card front, that is absolutely happening. There's no question. It's still happening out there. So again, it's not just the legislation; it is also the enforcement.

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Again, I would say—and this is really more to business than anybody in here—the more the companies give with one hand and take away with the other, the less loyalty and the more disloyalty they're actually going to engender in their potential clientele, because the more that people, when they go to cash in, will say, "You mean this wasn't worth anything? Then I'm not going to fly your airline; I'll fly another airline. I'm not going to stay at your hotel; I'll go to another hotel. I'm not going to use your service; I'm going to use somebody else's." That's the caveat out there for that.

The member mentioned, just in his preamble to talking about this bill, a couple of other bills that he has passed,

and they're good ones—the tip-out bill. I know the member is relatively recent here, compared to some of us old old-timers. Michael Prue—I want to say his name, because that was Michael Prue's bill originally. Nothing detracts from us—listen, the only way in opposition that we get any legislation passed is by convincing the government to do it. But it doesn't take anything from the government to give a nod to the people who originate these ideas. The originator of that tip-out bill was Michael Prue, so I just wanted to say that. He's happy in retirement now. I just want to mention his name.

The daycare wait-list, the fee there, that was my seatmate; that was Peter Tabuns's bill. Again, it doesn't take anything from them to give a little nod to the people who originally came up with these ideas that they then put into place. Both good ideas, both passed—good on it.

I just saw the Minister of Labour walk in. I'll use him as a good example. On the PTSD bill—mind you, it took me five tablings and many years to get that through, but he did give me credit. Again, I would just caution that, yes, the government gets its way and the opposition has its say. Occasionally what we say is pretty effective; it's pretty good. Occasionally we put forward bills and work really hard on getting the government's attention and getting them to move on those bills.

Do you know what? We don't ask for a lot over here, but it is nice to be mentioned. It is nice to recognize the hard work of the folk on this side of the House. I just wanted to correct that. I gave a good example: the Minister of Labour and others who have given a shout-out to people on this side of the aisle who worked very, very hard for many, many years to get some bills done and then relied on our friends in government to do it for us. That's just good manners. I just wanted to put that out there.

Will we support this? By the way, if you're just tuning in, what are we supporting here? This is Bill 47. What it would do is—and I like the fact that it's retroactive, absolutely; let's do it sooner rather than later—take away the ability of companies to put arbitrary expiry dates. There's no justification for it. Why should it expire, ultimately, except if the company goes out of business?

I'm one of those who had a lifetime membership in Vic Tanny's. Anybody remember Vic Tanny's?

Interjection: I remember Vic Tanny's.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm still here, and Vic Tanny's isn't, so there you go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But if they ever reopen, you've got your membership.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There you go; there you go. I think anybody of a certain age here has bought something in their lifetime, with a lifetime guarantee, where the company went out of life before the object; right? We couldn't collect.

Wherever we can, let's try to protect our consumers. So kudos there. Absolutely, let's hope this gets to committee because it would be interesting to add some strength. I know our friends over here in the Progressive Conservative Party were talking about adding some

amendments possibly to the bill. I, for one, would be very interested in what those amendments would be.

One of the things that is interesting, if I may, Madam Speaker, about this bill, is that it's relatively rare that we hear about rights of consumers anymore, and we do have a ministry that's devoted to this. There are lots of areas in terms of consumers' rights that we really need action on. It really is, for most consumers purchasing most things, a Wild West out there. It's definitely caveat emptor in terms of buying and purchasing services for the most part.

I hope this is the beginning of a trend on the government benches to look at not only frequent-flyer miles but also consumer services generally.

If I might make a suggestion: payday loans. It would be nice if they started looking out for people who are desperately poor and who are being fleeced every week by payday loan companies. That would be nice. They're paying 500% interest. It would be nice if, again, we weighed in there for those and for other consumers on other services.

I'll stop it at that. I'm interested. I certainly will support it and am interested in the amendments. Let's do what we can for the beleaguered consumers of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I want members to respect the member from Parkdale–High Park. When she was leading the debate, there was crosstalk amongst members. I want people to be respectful in this chamber.

I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I do have a lot of respect for the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think she brought up a lot of good points, and she brings up a lot of good points in this Legislature quite often, so respect to you.

It's an honour to speak to Bill 47. I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for bringing this bill here to the Legislature. It really will make a big difference in the province of Ontario. Protecting reward points is an important piece in consumer protection. I know that this will amend the 2002 Consumer Protection Act.

This is part of an ongoing trend by the member from Beaches–East York. He has been here for just over two years and—wow, the list of consumer protection items that have been put in place and pieces of legislation that look to better position people and protect people here in the province of Ontario. It wasn't long ago when he introduced his bill to protect the tips of people who are serving in restaurants to ensure that when they walked out at the end of the day, they actually walked out with the money in their pocket.

Also, I thought this was a brilliant idea, because I've spoken to parents in my riding about daycare—there was a list, and some people had to pay to get on this list, and he has been a strong advocate to ensure that when you go and look for daycare, they can't charge you money when you want to add yourself to a wait-list.

So I just want to say thank you again to the member from Beaches–East York, because you can come into a place like this, into the Legislature, and you can sit around, or you can actually get things done. This guy is getting things done, so I just want to say thank you.

This bill is an important bill. It's really about making sure that customers are thanked by businesses—sometimes small, but mostly big businesses—for their loyalty. I think the pieces within this bill speak to what I think most members in the House—because I've heard the members speak, and they both seem supportive of this bill. There was a bit of criticism, but mostly support. It speaks to making sure that when people are loyal to a company, the company is loyal back to them.

This happens in many different parts of the world. There are different types of loyalty programs that take place. In fact, when I lived in South Korea—I lived there for over two years. When you're in South Korea, you go to a restaurant or you go to a store—you can be in a grocery store—and if you're a good customer, they actually give you something for free right on the spot, and they call it service. It's quite common in South Korea for the owner of a business, if you're in a restaurant, to walk over and bring you an extra appetizer and say, "Thank you for your patronage back to this restaurant. We'd like to offer this as gratitude."

I know that happens in South Korea. In Canada we've got a different system. Loyalty cards seem to be the more popular system that is put in place. I think what the member is trying to do here is something that—when he told me the idea, I thought, "Well, what a brilliant idea." It probably should have been done a while back, but I know that this issue has become a more popular issue recently because of what's been happening with Air Miles.

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Could you imagine, Madam Speaker, taking years and years and years to build up those points? You say to yourself, "You know what? I'm only going to pick this one company, and I'm going to spend my money when it comes to this particular service at this company. And I'm going to do this for years. My game plan is that I'm going to spend all of my money within this company for five or six years, and maybe one day, when I build up enough points, I can get something for free." This is how loyalty works.

So a lot of people get out there and they start using that card and they carry it with them. I hear that 90% of Ontarians actually have cards in their pockets, on average, too. They get out there and they do this year after year after year, and then one day you find out that all those years of work—that five years, that six years of just dedicating your hard-earned dollars to that company, expecting a return—is just wiped out. I think it's a shame. I think it's unacceptable.

I hope that every single member in this Legislature supports this. The member from Parkdale–High Park said that she will be supporting it, and I believe the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—I wasn't sure

if he said he was going to support it or not, but I think he's going to support it. He didn't really give any reasons why he wouldn't support it. But at the end of the day, I hope that we can all come together and support this great bill coming from an MPP who's actually doing a lot of work in the Legislature and really protecting the people in his community and the people in every one of our communities as MPPs.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 47. I want to point out that I support the member's bill here today and I commend him for bringing it to the floor of the House. We all had that discussion years ago about expiring gift cards, which never made any sense at all, because if a person bought a gift card, they had every right to get that value out of it. Companies, I think, took advantage of the fact that, at that time, I think, less than half of gift cards were ever claimed within the prescribed length of time, which meant the businesses and companies got a lot of money without having to put anything out.

But I want to tell you about a particular credit card that I think was the best credit card that ever existed, and now it doesn't exist. I was one of those people who had it. It was the Citibank Driver's Edge credit card. I told my brother about it, and by the time he went to get one, well, you couldn't get it anymore. I told my colleague Gilles Bisson from Timmins–James Bay about it, and he said, "That's a great card," but I told him, "By the way, Gilles, you can't get it anymore." In fact, they took it on me, too, this past year, because it was so good that they just wouldn't honour it anymore.

The way it worked was, 2% of every purchase that you made could be put towards the purchase of a vehicle of any kind—not a GM card; not a Ford card. Any vehicle, new or used, you got a rebate after you made the purchase. When I bought my truck, a Dodge Ram EcoDiesel, a year and a half ago, my rebate for getting that Dodge truck was \$2,700 from that credit card.

Over the past 15 years, I've probably saved over \$20,000 to \$25,000 on vehicles by using that credit card with the rebate on it. My wife had one; I had one. When my two younger children were in college and university, I gave them a credit card. I had to pay the bill, but I was getting those points at the end. I was going to pay their bills anyway, so I said, "Well, here, take this credit card when you're gone to school. If you need to buy something, use the credit card." And they were very, very good about it. My kids were responsible, so they didn't spend too much of my money, but I kept getting those rewards points. But for the last five years, you haven't been able to get the credit card. Now, this year, they just discontinued it completely because it was just too good.

Having said that, the principle behind the member for Beaches–East York's bill speaks to what I'm saying about it. I never had to worry about not using those points, because I was always buying new vehicles because I drive a lot. So every three years, I was getting a

new vehicle; every three years, my wife was getting a new vehicle—all of that kind of stuff. We never had to worry about them expiring. But if they did expire, I would have lost out on those points.

So to have them non-expirable—if that's a proper way of putting it—is exactly the way it should be, because those points were not free to me. I had to buy every one of them by making a corresponding purchase in order to get those points. They didn't tell me, every month, "Oh, Mr. Yakabuski, we still like you. Here are your free points for the month." No; it was all based on the purchases that we made. We put everything we could on that card: groceries, clothes—everything we bought. If the establishment took the credit card, we used the credit card, because we were keen to acquire and accumulate those points.

If those points had expired, I'd have been very, very ticked off, because I paid for every one of them. Every one of those loyalty cards, whether it's Air Miles or whatever—there is nothing free in this world, folks. Let's get that one thing straight. You're buying every one of those points, and under no circumstances should they expire.

I support this bill and thank the member for bringing it forward.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to completely agree with the last statement of my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. This is really a transactional relationship between business and consumers. It's beyond a loyalty program. You are indeed paying for them.

It's interesting: My bank, which is CIBC, had 10% of its profit last year—\$1 out of every \$10 that the CIBC made in profits last year came from Aeroplan. If I were seeing the banks running this as a goodwill program—and I notice that it's the banks that are operating it now; Visa and the banks—then the rate of return on profit would seem to me to be less important than customer loyalty and satisfaction.

If we were reading that this was a marginally profitable thing for CIBC, you'd understand that maybe they have to restrict these things. Who is on the other end of that contract? It might be the MPP for Parkdale–High Park's son before his coffee shop took off, and maybe that means, in two or three years, whether or not he and his family actually have a vacation, because they've accepted the rules of the contract as the terms and then the banks changed the rules. Real people's lives get interrupted because the contract can be unilaterally changed without notice to people. I find that interesting and disturbing.

I love Air Canada, but since Aeroplan—I'm not sure if I'm the only one here old enough to remember when Aeroplan was essentially a branch of Air Canada. It was quite a lovely program. I've always loved flying Air Canada. I've generally had good experiences with them. I'm very proud of our flagship airline. But I will tell you: because of Aeroplan, I fly Porter more and I fly WestJet

a lot more because I find, with Aeroplan—all of us, when we fly in government, have to get the cheapest seats possible—that almost all the tickets I buy now don't qualify. I find that you can drop status so very quickly and there are such diminishing returns for having an Aeroplan card that I don't actually use it anymore. I've become a big fan of Hotwire and real-time discounts instead. I also find the service on Porter Airlines and on WestJet so incredible. They've really tried to get customer loyalty by providing better customer service. I have to say: Those other airlines have been remarkable. All of us, when we're on a plane, are sitting there with our laptops with our knees pressed into our teeth because there's so little leg room today that those kinds of things are a bit challenging.

The regulation of this, Madam Speaker, is really around the idea of a contract between people, which the government has to step into to really put the finger on the scales on the side of the consumer to recognize that this is value that is being taken from people by highly profitable banks that are really having trouble making the case that this isn't being driven by anything other than profit over customer service at this point.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It really is a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 47, which seeks to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, with respect to rewards points. It seems that consumer protection is the order of the day these days, and that's a very good thing. It's something that we're all proud to support.

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I really want to acknowledge and thank the member from Beaches–East York for raising awareness about consumer loyalty programs and the issues currently surrounding them. I'm certainly somebody who is in the same boat, so I'm concerned as well. Consumer protection is important, and any opportunity to further protect consumers is worth exploring. I know all too well, as I've recently introduced a private member's bill that deals with aspects of consumer protection, that this is very important to Ontarians, and I'm pleased that we are here supporting it. When there are measures that we can take to better protect Ontarians, it's important to take those steps and then implement them.

The proposed bill, if passed, would prohibit consumer agreements from allowing the expiration of reward points. Loyalty programs are designed to attract and reward customers of certain products or services. Customers who are loyal to those particular brands or services earn points in exchange for that loyalty. We all know how they work. There's probably not one single person in this chamber who doesn't have a reward program. I do. I use it a lot. I pay my bills every month. I always have the comfort that it's going to go into reward points. So to have a little bit of a betrayal on that agreement is something that doesn't sit well with anybody.

It's extremely important that we do maintain that fair market for Ontarians, and adequate consumer protection

is required to ensure this. That's where this bill comes into play. It's my opinion that this bill is a very important measure that, if implemented, would ensure that those loyal customers receive and retain the benefits that were offered to them through loyalty programs that they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I lend my full support to this bill, Bill 47. Merci beaucoup. Meegwetch. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate here this afternoon. I love Thursday afternoon debates, not just because you're in the chair but because I find we're always learning something new here.

The member from Parkdale–High Park was educating me this afternoon on who Vic Tanny was. I had to look him up on Wikipedia. For those of you who are in the gallery today, Vic Tanny was the American creator of the modern health club. Unfortunately, he left us in the 1970s. Thank you for the education this afternoon.

I am supporting the bill brought forward here this afternoon by the member from Beaches–East York, and the reason that I am is because it actually makes a lot of sense—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Jerry Agar from Newstalk 1010 fame—the member from Beaches–East York.

He supported a bill that I brought forward a couple of years ago: the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act. I appreciated his support on that bill because that also made a lot of sense. You've seen the government actually implement some of the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act in various budgets since.

It is really easy to see where this bill came from, Madam Speaker. It does make a lot of sense because, over the summer, arguably the most iconic consumer rewards brand in the world, Air Miles, walked into a public relations firestorm, and they've since been trying to dig their way out of this. We also have the Shoppers Optimum Program that's currently the subject of a lawsuit in Quebec. So there have been some of these rewards programs that haven't just gone out of business, but they are in some trouble as well.

It's a bit funny that we even have these programs in the first place. It's understandable. Reliable consumers are good for business. You want to have that return customer. They're a steady stream of revenue. So if there's some reward for them, they're going to come back, right?

A couple of weeks ago, I met with the Ontario Federation of Labour here in the building, and I was talking to a gentleman from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He told me a story about how his father had come here from Malta to get a job at Simpsons. You remember Simpsons, but I'm not sure if our guests remember Simpsons. It was purchased by the Bay. I'm sure they know the Bay because it's just over on Bloor Street. This guy told me about how his dad was

able to raise a family on a job where he started out packing and wrapping purchases at a counter at Simpsons, and eventually loading, unloading and driving delivery trucks.

Getting and retaining loyal customers used to be a pretty simple thing, actually: You'd offer a quality product at a price that's affordable, and then you'd make sure that they got good customer service. The world has changed a little bit now. They've brought in all these reward programs, and that's how companies are retaining business.

There's a famous joke out there that gas used to be 60 cents a gallon and people were actually fighting for the right to go out and pump it for you. Now we've got gas that's almost \$3 a gallon and you have to pump it yourself.

Anyway, I am supportive of this bill brought forward by the member from Beaches–East York. After all, if we have companies that are advertising unrealistic services and potential benefits that they know that they're never going to deliver on, only to create deadlines that no average Ontarian can realistically meet while still trying to ensure the kind of repeat business needed to survive through another business cycle—or election cycle, quite possibly—then what the Ontario Liberals are really about is trademark infringement. That's their shtick, and I think that's really an underlying message in the bill that's brought forward by my colleague from Beaches–East York. But I think he can count on the support of the parties in the Legislature, from what I've heard this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Beaches–East York to wrap up.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to all the colleagues in the House. I very much appreciate that what I have heard in the House also suggests we will have unanimous support for this bill.

I particularly want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. My advice to him would be that he use his reward points and buy himself an umbrella and then maybe share it with the member from Prince–Edward Hastings. They can bring it in here with certification, maybe get it in as a prop, with unanimous consent.

One of the things the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry talked about is how it's like a lottery. Well, it's not. This is the clear message that we heard certainly from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

You have to pay for this privilege. With the CIBC credit card—their Visa card with Aeroplan—it's like a \$200-a-year fee just to have the privilege of accumulating points. So you're actually buying services, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about. You're buying services. You're actually probably paying more for the product. This is money that you've actually put into the system, and you deserve to get it out of the system when the time is right.

To the member from Parkdale–High Park, of course, Michael Prue did bring this forward. I'm happy to use his name in the House. He could have been a little bit more gracious after the election, but that's over now and it's fine. To your point of disloyalty cards—I think I am doing a favour to Air Miles and others because what they do by pissing people off or upsetting people—excuse me, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You know the member has to withdraw.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I withdraw. My apologies.

By upsetting people, they're actually creating disloyalty amongst their own loyalty group, which is a mistake. It's a concept I call bad profit. They may think they're doing something good for the bottom line, but in the long run, it's going to hurt.

I very much appreciate the member from Kingston and the Islands for her remarks and her support, and the minister here. I do appreciate it, because loyalty should not have an expiry date.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately take the necessary steps to work with and enable the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network to address current wait times for MRI in the Niagara region which far exceed the provincial average.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 30. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is a pleasure for me to rise today and talk about the issue of health care in Niagara. I believe, as I hope every member in this House believes, that health care is a right here in Canada and Ontario. Now, in order to ensure that right is fulfilled, it is important to ensure that everyone has access to that health care.

If a constituent in my riding isn't able to get the health care they need in a reasonable time, then I believe the government is failing to meet that obligation it owes the taxpayers in my riding and Ontario. Access to quality health care is not a privilege; quite frankly, it's a right of every citizen.

This motion is something that comes directly from the residents in my riding. I've heard people from Fort Erie to Niagara-on-the-Lake tell me about problems with health care in our riding. Residents in my riding know they can meet with me directly, any time they want. All they have to do is call.

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I love speaking with people in my community. Not only does this draw my attention to important issues, it

also allows me better understanding of issues for other perspectives.

Recently, more and more constituents have started coming forward and telling me and my staff they weren't able to get the health care they needed. They were being told that they needed MRIs, and then they would wait up to six months before an MRI was actually booked. Think about that for a second.

One resident in my riding was told that he might be at risk of multiple sclerosis—or, as it's usually called, MS—but he was going to have to wait six months to find out. Imagine: He needed to wait almost six months to have a scan on his brain which would tell him if he was going to have MS. Imagine what kind of stress that would put on you and your loved ones if that happened.

Other residents, who have no idea whether or not they need surgery, have been forced to wait months at a time to get diagnosed. They sit and wait in pain because we can't get them the MRIs fast enough. Imagine the stress it puts on their families and on themselves, having no idea if they have a disease or if they need major surgery, because the MRIs weren't deemed to be an emergency.

This should not be a reality in Ontario. Our citizens deserve better.

Stories like those are what tipped me off that there was a real problem here. It was only when I looked into the problem that I realized how bad it actually is.

Madam Speaker, did you know what the ministry target time is to receive a diagnostic scan? It's 28 days. That's right: Just under a month. I believe that everybody would think that's reasonable. Do you know what the actual average wait time is in Ontario? According to the Ministry of Health's own records, the average is 102 days—102 days of not knowing what's wrong; 102 days of not knowing if you require surgery or if you have MS—102 days. That is, quite simply, unacceptable.

That means that right now in Ontario, the average wait time for an MRI is three times—I'll repeat that—three times the target average that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care set for themselves. That means that for many of the members sitting with me in this House today, your constituents are facing these same problems. Your constituents are suffering because they can't get the health care services they so badly need.

That being said, this problem is particular to the Niagara region, from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie and everywhere in between, where the average wait time—listen to this, because this is surprising to anybody—for an MRI has now risen to the shocking number of 120 days.

According to the NHS, nine out of 10 residents receive an MRI in 120 days, four times the provincial average. Nine out of 10 residents in my riding wait four months to have a scan when they are experiencing health issues. It's unacceptable. It's unacceptable for me, it's unacceptable for my constituents and it had better be unacceptable for the Minister of Health. I'm glad he's here today.

I can tell you that this is something residents in Niagara notice. We have a large portion of seniors in my

riding, and you had better believe that they have noticed when they can't get health care.

But there are certainly others that notice as well. What about the parents who can't get their kids a scan for four months, or a husband, trying to look after his wife, who has to wait and wait to find out what's wrong?

In fact, when it first became an issue in my riding and the local papers started writing about it and how terrible it was, my office was flooded with calls and e-mails from people experiencing the same delay. Even on my Facebook page, I get message after message and comment after comment from people who are living through real hardships because of these wait times and want to speak up. These residents are so upset that they want to go on the news and tell their story.

Think about this: They're willing to share their medical history with thousands of strangers to try to solve this problem. They shouldn't have to do that in the province of Ontario.

I've had very productive meetings with the top NHS staff. We're in constant contact with them over a number of issues. They know this is a problem and they know they have the tools to fix the problem. In most places in the province, there's no room for a new MRI machine. As I'm sure you're all aware, MRI machines are quite large and have some very specific requirements that need to be met in order for them to be properly installed. What that means in most cases is that they cannot simply get a new MRI machine, install it, and then sit back and watch the wait times fall.

However, that's not the case in my riding of Niagara Falls. In Niagara, we actually have the space set aside for an MRI machine. We just need an actual machine. We even have the experts needed to run the machine, because they just built a new hospital there a few years ago and put it in place; they're just not using it.

So the only thing stopping these residents from getting the health care that I believe they're entitled to is the Minister of Health himself. Starting today, the Minister of Health needs to recognize that this is a problem and start taking action to address it.

Madam Speaker, we can fix this problem tomorrow. I've worked closely with the local health providers to provide a reasonable solution to the MRI problem. In the short term, we need to have the LHIN approve some funding to help us deal with the backlog. This funding would allow to us to provide relief to all the residents who are sitting at home right now, frustrated or under stress because they're waiting up to 120 days for their MRIs.

You might be sitting there asking yourself, "Well, how would that funding help you? You still don't have a new machine." That's a fair question. Well, it's quite simple, actually. You just have to go down the road from Niagara into Hamilton, and they are doing quite well with their MRI wait times. In Hamilton, their wait times are just over 30 days. Clearly, that's a good number. It makes me wonder, if the minister can achieve that number in Hamilton, why Niagara is being treated so poorly when it's just down the road.

We would like to see some of the Niagara patients sent to Hamilton for MRIs if they're willing to go—not so many that we drive up Hamilton wait times, but some of the longest-waiting patients.

Secondly, and I think this is important, we'd like to see that funding invested into running the currently operating MRI machine around the clock. I know that some in Niagara have expressed in the media and elsewhere that running the machines around the clock won't help, but I fail to see how that's possible. How could running an MRI machine more than you are now not help more people get more MRIs? The short-term fixes aren't going to solve the problem entirely, but they will certainly be a step in the right direction.

The second and long-term part of our plan to address the unacceptable wait times for MRIs in Niagara gets to the heart of this motion. The minister needs to provide the medical care that my constituents are entitled to. That is non-negotiable. They have an obligation as the government of this province to ensure that the residents have the health care and we're providing a number of ways they can do that.

This motion gets to the heart of the issue because it seeks a long-term solution to this issue: not a Band-Aid solution, not a stopgap measure. We need a real, long-term, sustainable solution to address the unacceptable wait times for MRIs in Niagara.

I encourage every member of this House to think about the residents in their own riding as they vote on it. Are there people in your riding who would benefit from reduced wait times for MRIs? Are there people in your riding who have been denied timely access to health care they need? We have a chance here to work together and to make this right, not just for Niagara but for all the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as so many of you know, we have a number of problems around health care in Niagara. That's just what happens when you are the best place to retire in the world: You get a lot of people who want to retire there. And we all know from first-hand experience that the closer you get to that point, the more health care problems your body has.

So what are some of those other issues in health care we face in Niagara? Well, we're still waiting for our Niagara Falls hospital. I'm certainly glad the minister is here. The people of Niagara Falls and Fort Erie are still waiting for their hospital, to have better health care. We're sitting at phase 1 today and we're ready to move to phase 2. While plans are ready, people are waiting. The staff at the NHS submitted their phase 1 plan months ago and are still waiting for approval. They've got their phase 2 plan ready to go, but we can't submit it because phase 1 hasn't been approved. We need to take our commitment to health care seriously. The residents in my riding cannot afford to wait for anything else, and they shouldn't have to. They pay their taxes; they expect quality care, not in 2023 but today.

1440

So with my motion, we have a chance to tackle part of the health care problem in Niagara, and we have a chance

to finally begin to address the completely unacceptable wait times for MRIs in Niagara. Hopefully, we can all use this as an opportunity to begin to address the other health care issues that exist in Ontario.

We have a plan in place. These plans have been created with the help of the local health professionals, and they're based on the needs of the residents. I hope my fellow members will support this motion and make this reasonable plan a reality. This is just one of the things we can do today to ensure that the residents of Niagara have the health care that is their right.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Before I get started, as a sign of solidarity with the member from Parkdale–High Park, I too remember Vic Tanny's, although it's obvious I didn't get a lifetime membership.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You did, you just never used it.

Mr. John Fraser: That's it. Thank you.

I want to thank the member for bringing this motion forward. Obviously, it's a very important health care situation in his community. I come from the Champlain LHIN. We have some really challenging wait times around MRIs. I'll get into this a little bit later about local health planning, which is critical when we have these kinds of circumstances.

We've got some really stubbornly high wait times in MRIs in Ottawa. They've kind of crept up a bit. One of the challenges that we found is around capacity and it's around how you plan for that capacity. There are a couple of things. I remember in 2003, we had two or maybe three MRIs in the Champlain region; now there are 12. One of the challenges they found was that there were a number of people on a number of waiting lists, which would not be the same thing in the member's community. The wait-list data wasn't always that accurate. One of the things that they said was, "Well, here's what we have to do. We actually have to centrally plan and work on where our capacities are so we can distribute more evenly those scans that need to be done." So they said, "Okay, we've got capacity elsewhere. We can be more efficient at doing what we're doing."

The other thing, when they looked at it, is they said, "Well, let's take a look at the utilization." The MRI is the gold standard, so what they did was, they took a look at the MRIs that were there and said, "Okay, what are we doing them for? What are the results of that? What is practice, if you take a look in other jurisdictions, as to how you should use this diagnostic tool?" They actually just recently sent a letter to physicians in the community that said, "You don't need to do an MRI for a hip or knee replacement. These other diagnostic procedures are indicated."

So you have to look around that utilization and then you have to look at your hours, as the member mentioned. You have to say, "How can I build some more capacity in here in an efficient way?" But I do think, when we take a look at the wait times numbers, you have

to do a bit of a deep dive. We started measuring wait time numbers in 2004, 2005; they were never measured before that. I remember saying the same thing as the member from Niagara Falls in my community of Ottawa South, when I was working for the former member, about the challenges that were there.

To come back to it, you have to look at those numbers divided up. Some 90% of the people get it within 120 days, but there are a number of categories—I think there are four categories—that designate the triage for the urgency of the diagnostic scan. You need to go in there and take a look at those numbers. That's not to say that that wait time is an acceptable number, but it's to say that if you have a brain tumor, you're within 24 to 48 hours. We report those times. We don't always take a deeper dive to take a look at what those numbers are and what they mean to people inside those four categories of triaging. So I think it's important to look at that.

Again, I want to congratulate the member on bringing it forward. I understand it is an important issue inside his community.

That's all. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's my pleasure today to join the debate on the member for Niagara Falls's motion with regard to MRI wait times in the Niagara region, in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network.

One of the challenges we face today is that technology is a wonderful thing—it has brought tremendous advancements into health care, as well as other parts of our lives—but sometimes we fail to keep pace with the technology that our wonderful scientists and engineers invent, and then it creates a problem for us.

In health care, it has created all kinds of problems, because technology that didn't exist many, many years ago is now sometimes almost automatic, in some cases, as part of the diagnostic tools being used by health care professionals. The MRI, which of course is not cheap, is one of those. If we're going to work to reduce wait times for those MRIs, there are two things you've got to do: You either have to have more capacity and more funding to fund more tests, or, as part of that, you have to be more judicious about how you mete out those tests.

I've had two hips replaced. I've never had an MRI—no need to. I think you have to make sure that not only do the patients understand when an MRI is properly indicated, but also that physicians don't feel that they should automatically order an MRI if it really isn't necessarily indicated, or if they feel that they're being pressured by the patient. A lot of people today will walk into a physician's office, and they're having one kind of problem or another, and they say, "Well, I need an MRI. Send me for an MRI." Well, it's not always the necessary tool that should be used in diagnosing whatever problem that patient might have.

We've created a lot of our wait times by taking technology and sometimes overusing it. One of the steps we need to do is to do better at how we order tests. I think

that's one of the things that our health care system is going through. We have to be much more judicious about how we order tests.

I don't think we should be looking at the balance sheet every time we do something in health care; that's not the idea. We have to help the patient. But there is a dollar value attached to everything we do in health care, as there is in everything else.

I understand and I appreciate the member for Niagara Falls, because he is standing up for his constituents. He sees a situation in his local community where the wait time is significantly higher than the wait time in a nearby neighbouring community. That's not acceptable, because then people feel—and rightfully so—that they are being denied access to tests that other people are able to get in a more timely fashion.

I think there's a solution here, but it requires all members of the health care community and all of us as political and administrative people to be working together to make sure that we're getting the best return on our investment in our health care system. Sometimes that's going to require some hard decisions with respect to how we order tests—not just MRIs, but other tests. Sometimes there's another test that would do as well in diagnosing a problem. Because the MRI is the gold standard, the Cadillac, people want the Cadillac.

We've got to figure out how we're going to do this, because our health care system is in a funding crisis. Anybody who says that's not the case is dreaming. There are only so many dollars to go around, and we have a lot of things that have to be done in this province and in this country. Health care eats up a large chunk of that funding. We're going to have to figure that out.

But making people languish on wait-lists is not the answer. We've got to figure out how to shorten those lists in the best way, so that the best outcomes are possible.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion before us from my colleague from Niagara Falls.

This motion is a good one for people of the Niagara region who are waiting much too long for health care in their communities, specifically for MRIs. More than that, this is proof that there is another failure in the health care system under the Wynne government and that the crisis that we have in health care has been created.

1450

Ontario wait times for most services are out of control. Bills like this only highlight the growing and critical issues facing our health care system, like 260-plus-day wait times for home care, 300-plus-day wait times for surgeries and 100-plus-day wait times for MRIs—not to mention the multi-billion dollar backlog for the crumbling infrastructure of our hospitals; the annual nursing and staff cuts. Frankly, the list is too long to fully recite here today.

The Wynne Liberals tell us that Ontario's target for wait times for MRIs is 28 days. However, the average provincial wait time is 102 days.

The wait times are constantly falling behind at greater and greater numbers than the targets set by the ministry. Ontarians need health care they can count on, and waiting more than 100 days for a diagnostic procedure fails that standard.

The Niagara Health System acknowledged this was an issue of major concern and committed publicly to a plan that would work our team to lower MRI wait times. I was pleased to learn that the Niagara Health System supported the motion by my colleague, as they felt that their local operating LHIN had not acted in due haste when it came to purchasing and installing a new MRI machine.

My colleague and the Niagara Health System are not alone in their concerns with LHINs. The Wynne Liberals introduced Bill 41, the Patients First Act, and while many believe that the purpose of the bill was to simply eliminate community care access centres, understood by many to be an unnecessary level of bureaucracy and cost to an already underfunded health care system that is buckling under the weight of soaring administrative salaries—and yes, topically, Bill 41 does dissolve the CCACs, ushered in by a past Conservative government. However, it does seek to transfer the employees, assets, obligations and functions to the local health integration networks, or LHINs.

What we need to remember is that the expanded mandate of the local health integration networks that will be enabled through the legislation will occur in spite of the fact that this government did not complete the legislated five-year mandatory review of those local health integration networks.

So here we have a case where there are concerns about a locally operating LHIN, and this is before the transfer of an entirely new set of responsibilities is dropped in their laps.

The Ontario Health Coalition and many others have expressed grave concerns about this move to give LHINs such an expanded mandate. But when a piece of legislation excludes the right of the public to participate in meetings, as the legislation calls for, and makes families and public input discretionary, it's a cause for great concern. Sadly, we don't even know if the LHINs are cost-effective; nor do we know if they're even capable of taking on the new and expanded role because this government didn't do their homework once again.

Speaker, back to the motion at hand: Interestingly enough, I went to the Ministry of Health Ontario wait times website that details the Ministry of Health's strategy for addressing wait times in the province. It says, "Ontario's Wait Time Strategy was developed to improve access to five key health services by reducing wait times for cancer surgery, cardiac procedures, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacement and MRI and CT scans.

"The strategy has since expanded to include all surgeries and time in emergency rooms (ER). The government's goal is to improve public access to surgeries and procedures delivered to Ontarians; implement new initiatives to improve ER processes; and create a system of accountability through transparent reporting of wait time information."

Out of curiosity, I entered the information to find out what the MRI wait times were for my hometown of London, and I can tell you that I was surprised by what I found. The results showed that the target wait time was 28 days; that the average wait time was 102 days; and for two institutions in London providing MRIs, one noted a 50-day wait time and the other noted a 168-day wait time, proving that even in London, there is a large disparity in service delivery and wait times. In fact, the delays amounted to 140 days longer than the targeted provincial wait time and 60 days longer than the average provincial wait time.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Niagara Falls for showing real leadership for the people of his community by putting his motion forward. He and his staff have worked tenaciously and collaboratively to accomplish a real solution for their constituents, and he should be proud of finding a solution when this government couldn't.

We know that if we don't make big changes soon, we won't be able to undo some of the damage that's been done to the health care system. So, Speaker, I again want to congratulate the member for bringing this motion forward, recognizing the needs of his community and standing up for what's going to be better for his constituents and his riding.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I've been listening intently to what everybody is saying, but first let me offer my congratulations to the member from Niagara for bringing this motion forward, because before we become critics or before we become ministers or parliamentary assistants, our first allegiance is to the people who send us down here in the first place. We're supposed to represent those constituencies, and when we see something in our constituencies we'd like to see work better, it's our job to bring forward that information, working through the ministries, working through private members' time and advocating in any way you can to get what you need done for your community. I think that's exactly what the member is doing in this regard.

A previous speaker talked about how we've seen advances in technology. I guess I'm of the vintage when MRIs didn't exist, when we relied on X-rays, the new science of the time. Since that time, the increases we've seen in technology, particularly in health technology, allow us to do all sorts of other things. We're able to diagnose more quickly, we're able to diagnose more accurately, and we can get the treatments in place more quickly if we can get to the diagnosis more quickly. That is what I think is at the heart of the member's motion.

I think he's phrased the motion in a very good and a very constructive manner, because he uses terms like "to work with and enable" and "to address current wait times" and to try to get up to at least the provincial average for those wait times. I find nothing unreasonable about that.

We all went through a period in this House—certainly around 2003-04—where the pace of technology and the demand for that technology was outpacing the government's ability, in a sense, to deal with it. Change was happening at a pace that was much quicker than we had the ability either to fund it or to even construct it and build it.

But we came in with a strategy that was attempting to deal specifically with those changes, Speaker. One of the measures we used was MRI wait times. We were able to bring the wait times—certainly in the area of the province that I'm from—down to something which I think most people feel is reasonable.

I think that, like an awful lot of things in the health care system in Canada and in the province of Ontario, most members of this House would agree that when you need that help very, very quickly, when you're in an emergency situation, the care that you get in the province of Ontario, Speaker, is second to none. Where I think we start to run into issues is when it's not a critical injury but it's something that's a serious injury. It's something you want dealt with and there's a treatment period that's going to follow, perhaps, but it's not like you land in the emergency room one day. If you're in the emergency room and you've got a serious injury in the province of Ontario, as I understand it, you're into the MRI ahead of anybody else in the province, Speaker—or ahead of anybody else, certainly, in that hospital at that time.

I just think the approach that the member has brought forward is a reasonable one, Speaker. I think we should be proud of the advances we've been able to make on wait times in our health care system over the past decade or so.

Does that mean it can't get better? Absolutely not. I think we should be proud of the work we've been able to do as a Legislature to date and us as a government to date, with the assistance of the opposition. Can we do better? I think absolutely we can, and that is what is at the heart of the motion we're being asked to support today: Can we do better in this particular member's constituency? I would support him in that.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Congratulations to the member from Niagara Falls for bringing this motion forward here this afternoon. He always does a great job standing up for Niagara Falls—if you were from Niagara Falls, why wouldn't you stand up for Niagara Falls?—and his constituents as well.

1500

I don't have a lot of time to speak to this motion or to the specifics about the Niagara health care system, but I would like to speak to the broader issue of wait times and health care, if I could.

I received this correspondence this morning from a resident of Prince Edward–Hastings, down in Prinyers Cove. I know the health minister is familiar with Prinyers Cove because he was actually on a tour this summer in Prince Edward county and toured Prince Edward County

Memorial Hospital and the new emergency services buildings there. But this is what Tom Rowntree had to say this morning to me. This is his story of the last 11 weeks or so:

“Doctor Cleminson did an endoscopy in my esophagus on September 1, 2016, and found cancer in the esophagus and stomach. I was advised the first week of September that this was a very aggressive cancer and the sooner it was dealt with, the better my survival rate would be.

“I was then scheduled for a CT scan in Trenton, as Belleville CT scanning was not in service. September 16 the CT scan was performed in Trenton hospital, and cancer, 7 centimetres, was found,” with a heart problem as well. “These results were sent to Kingston cancer centre, as Doctor Cleminson was on vacation the following week and timing mattered to this doctor.

“On September 23, I received an e mail from Kingston cancer centre to meet with Doctors Mahmud and Tomiak on September 29. At this time I was told I needed a” pulmonary “function test and a PET scan in Ottawa Hospital. I went to my family doctor's office September 23 and was told that the cancer at this time was still confined to the esophagus area, but no mention of the heart problem.

“In early October I went to the” pulmonary “function test in Hotel Dieu hospital in Kingston. On October 6 I went back to Ottawa for the PET scan. October 7 I met with a surgeon, Dr. Chung, in Kingston and was told of the cancer surgery; and at this time I was told the heart problem dated back to September 16 CT scan in Trenton.”

You're following along here? That's a lot of different appointments in a lot of different cities and towns that this man has had to go through

“I immediately made an appointment with my cardiologist on October 11 for a stress test and consult for the upcoming heart procedure. The cardiologist, Dr. Joza, released his report on October 12, as this had become a very important urgent matter. At this time I was told if I lift more than 15 to 20 pounds, it could very easily rupture the aorta and I would be in immediate danger.”

“Now think of this: Six weeks ago” he was “told about the cancer so I wanted to get my home in order.” He brought in the 60-foot dock and the marine railway, cut limbs from trees, unloaded his dump trailer, carried in 50-pound bags of salt for water softener—something that he shouldn't have been doing because the doctors couldn't get their messages straight, because it's so disjointed. I think that's the point that Mr. Rowntree is trying to make.

“The time has come to move things on faster,” he writes, “and more efficiently. Stop the delays. If this was your family, would 11 weeks be acceptable to you?”

“Now, on June 22, 2016, my brother Doug was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and August 2, 2016 he passed away. Now my family wants to know if cancer treatments will ever start, or are these delays normal in Ontario?”

This is a very frustrated man, very frustrated and concerned. He has been to seven different hospitals across the province, from Picton to Kingston to Ottawa to Belleville to Trenton to Brampton. He says, "Please get me some help to stop the delays and get on with the cancer treatment."

Obviously, there is a lack of connection in our health care system, and I think that's part of the concern brought forward by the member from Niagara Falls. I support him this afternoon.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to speak in favour of the motion that was brought by my colleague from Niagara Falls.

I come from northern Ontario. For the longest time we've been dealing with those long, long wait-lists for MRIs in northern Ontario. But now it's starting to spread. It's starting to spread through rural Ontario. It's starting to spread to basically everywhere but in downtown Toronto. That worries me. That worries me very much.

Up in the north, they have done everything they can. Did you know that at Health Sciences North, the hospital in Sudbury, the MRI machine—we have one; count it—goes 24/7? When this thing breaks down, that means there are no MRI machines—not for the emergency, not for the cancer patient at the cancer treatment centre; there are none.

They have had a request in to the LHINs for a second MRI machine for as long as I can remember, but the LHIN is not there to advocate for the needs of the population it serves. The LHIN is there to bring the message from the minister that he does not want to fund a second MRI machine for the people of the northeast. That depends on our only tertiary hospital, which is Health Sciences North in Sudbury.

What does that mean? That means that my friend Susan, who needed an MRI, first of all had to wait six months for her MRI. She's about 81 years old right now, and I saw the decline in her health status. Susan is a thriving 80 years old. She plays bocce in the summer; she curls in the winter. But for six months, she couldn't move. She lost most of her muscle mass. It was just pitiful to see how frail she got while she was waiting for that MRI, which finally came at 3 a.m. on a Sunday morning. So we set our alarm clock, and at 1 o'clock in the morning, we went and picked up Susan and we brought her to the hospital. The only good thing about this ordeal is that the parking was pretty easy. It was 2:30 a.m. and there were some pretty good parking spots. The rest of it was a nightmare.

Bringing an 80-year-old to the hospital in the middle of the night so that she can get an MRI that she's been waiting for for six months is not what people expect. This is what we've been living with in northern Ontario for a long time, and this is what the good people of Niagara are now facing. This is no good. This cannot continue.

Do you know why we have this, Speaker? It's because our government has been starving our hospitals for five years. For four years, there were zero budget increases.

During that period of time, the demands for hospital services went up, the acuity of people went up and the aging of people went up. But no; they are starving it. Do you know what I see in the future? I hope I'm wrong, but what I see in the future is that people get so disgusted, disappointed, dis-whatever—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Disillusioned.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —disillusioned; thank you—with their hospital that then somebody will say, "The way to fix this is privatization. The way to fix this is to let people with money go to private clinics for their MRIs. This way we will free up all sorts of time for people in our hospitals."

I can see this as clear as day. This government has been so bound and determined to privatize anything that is not acute patient care. The hospitals, to balance their budgets, are supposed to send it to the community. But what does sending it to the community mean, Speaker? It means that it is privatized. There are patient fees that will be creeping up. It means that there is no transparency, no accountability. We're seeing more and more and more of that.

It is sad that, coming from northern Ontario, this is what we have been facing for a long time. It doesn't matter how loud we scream: Nobody listens, because we are from northern Ontario and we're easy to ignore. But the good people of Niagara are not going to take this sitting down. They went to see their MPP. Their MPP stood up for them and brought that into the House. I hope that today people do the right thing and realize that it needs to be addressed.

I could tell you that medicare is in the balance. If people lose confidence that they can get the proper care they need within medicare, within our hospital system, they will look elsewhere. And then the gurus of privatization, i.e., the PCs or the Liberals, will say, "Oh, we know how we can fix this. We will privatize some more." I don't want this. I want the good people of Niagara to have access to MRIs when they need them.

The wait time of 28 days is a long enough time to wait when you're in pain, when you don't know what's coming. Let's try to meet those target dates. We set those targets for a reason, and we should be holding onto this. If that means having the resources to run that machine 24/7, absolutely. And if that means that Health Sciences North needs a second MRI so that we don't live in fear that the MRI will shut down and so will our cancer treatment centre, then you fund a second one just so that you have a little bit of capacity within your system.

I hope the government will see that the motion that the good member from Niagara Falls brings forward is worthy of support from all of this House so that the good people of Ontario will continue to look at our health care system as something we can all be proud of. I look forward to that.

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

1510

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: It's my pleasure to join the debate.

I want to congratulate the member from Niagara Falls for his advocacy for his community and on this important issue. It's a matter of common interest and concern when we talk about wait times, and MRI machines in particular. We all have aging parents, and we care about our families. We have a common interest and concern with the member opposite. I want to reach across the aisle and say to him congratulations for bringing this forward. It's an important conversation to have.

I just want to use my time today, if I may, to talk a little bit about what we're doing in the LHIN. With my riding in Burlington, I'm in the same catchment area as the member opposite, and we're in the same LHIN, in fact, so I want to talk a little bit about what we're doing. I also, at the same time, want to talk about my community at the end, if I have time, to just talk about the proud investments that are being made in the Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington that will include a focus on MRI procedures, because I think that's an important bit of context.

Again, congratulations to the member for his advocacy.

One of the reasons I like private members' time is because it allows us to do a deep dive into issues that are often shared passions amongst us. In this regard, I was pleased to see that our government is investing \$77.89 million this year to address wait times. That includes an additional 6,400 surgical procedures and, in addition, 200,000 MRI and CT hours of operation.

The Minister of Labour spoke to it earlier, and it's absolutely true, that while we are making progress and while we are closing gaps, there is still more work for us to do. Again, this is a timely conversation for us to have, but it doesn't mean that we're not addressing it and that we're not concerned. My understanding is that our government is hopeful that we'll be able to provide additional support to Niagara this year to address those wait times. So the member's advocacy, and the timing of that advocacy, is well placed.

Our government is continuously and currently in the process of working with the LHIN and Niagara Health System to determine how we can support these health systems and improve those MRI wait times. I'm told as well that there are no waits for MRI scans for the most urgent or highest-priority P1 cases, and that's good.

Again, the P1 targets are being met in Niagara. This means, for individuals who require urgent diagnosis or care, that they are receiving an MRI within 24 hours. I think that's a bit of context. We do acknowledge, however, that there's more work to be done in that 2-to-4 priority area. So I think, again, that this is a timely debate.

I want to close by again saluting my community and talking a little bit about the work that we're doing with the LHIN to invest in a brand new Joseph Brant Hospital, and to show the member that advocacy works. I can speak to a particular initiative last year.

I was pleased to lobby for, or advocate for, funds to help with a rapid assessment clinic in our emergency department at Joseph Brant. We were at the bottom of the

wait times list in Ontario for our emergency department. The hospital seized on that and, working with the LHIN, there was a requisite investment of \$2.7 million in provincial funding over three years. That has dramatically improved the wait times in our emergency department. This clinic has made all the difference. It's referring patients. We're getting the right care at the right time and in the right place, and that's really servicing not only the people in my community but beyond.

So, advocacy—well done. Certainly, investments are being made by our government. We're going to continue to do it.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that I'm very pleased to rise today and speak about the member from Niagara Falls's motion.

He's raising awareness on behalf of his constituents in the Niagara Falls area, but also raising awareness throughout the province on wait times. He's focusing on MRI wait times, not for urgent emergency care, where people have maybe been in a car accident or fallen down, but still, nonetheless, people are in terrible back pain and knee pain and hip pain. They need those MRIs, whether the minister feels that it's absolutely urgent or not.

The provincial mandate right now by this government is 28 days to wait for an MRI. We are hearing that in Niagara Falls, that wait is 114 days, and months to wait for an MRI. The member in Nickel Belt spoke about northern Ontario and how they're waiting for months.

I just want to mention that when governments talk about investing in health care, they often talk about increases in investment in health care. But where that money went and whether it went to increased spending on MRIs is quite another story.

We hear about billions of dollars invested in actual buildings. Well, buildings don't provide health care; they provide the place to provide that health care. Billions of dollars to build a hospital, yet oftentimes there isn't the \$1 million to buy an MRI machine. The hospital is told, through its foundation, "Fundraise. Raise the parking rates." That's why we saw such an increase in parking rates. It wasn't that the hospitals were greedy; they were trying to buy things, like MRI machines, for their hospitals. Many hospitals have new wings that, to tell you the truth, are empty. There are rooms that I have seen in hospitals where there should be MRI machines and there aren't. They're just empty rooms.

What are we seeing? We're seeing more money spent on bureaucracy. This morning Bill 41 was passed by this government with support from the NDP. Our caucus, the PC caucus, did not support it. In my opinion, Bill 41 risks the privacy of all of Ontario's patients and increases the bureaucracy in cost and more inefficiency. We're going to see doctors, front-line health care workers, spending more of their time doing administrative work instead of spending time with their patients and actually providing the health care that's needed. So we're paying for

bureaucracy and we're paying for buildings, but people are saying that they're not receiving the health care that they provide the tax dollars to buy.

I think a real reset needs to be done—a real rethink. We need to focus on patient outcomes, because that's what health care is about. It's not about giving people MRIs because they want an MRI; it's about giving people the tests and the treatment that is required so that they have a better quality of life.

That's really what it comes down to, not just to lengthening their life and they're hooked up to machines, but to provide timely care so that they don't result in having to need sometimes even more expensive procedures because we've prolonged the wait times for them to have a test in order to provide the right care.

Let's stop spending valuable health care dollars on bureaucracy and structures; let's get it into front-line health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Niagara Falls to wrap up.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to thank all my colleagues and my friends for their comments because it is a big issue not only in Niagara but right across the province. Also, something that we don't do a lot of: I want to thank my staff, who worked extremely hard on this particular motion, meeting with the constituents and talking to them to see if they would talk about their issues in public and heighten awareness of it. So I want to say to my constituents and my staff: thank you very much.

What I didn't get out in my 12 minutes, I want to at least say. This wait time in Niagara was not a problem that just happened. It was a problem that we had for 10 years—well over 100 days. It was a problem for 10 years. What happened was that we built a new hospital. It was built in St. Catharines, just down the road from Niagara. They put in place in the new hospital where they could actually have the facility to do MRIs.

We have the expertise. We have the talent. What we didn't get was the proper number of machines, and in this case, the LHINs didn't provide the funding. What we used to do in Niagara is run 24 hours a day, and that's not happening today.

What I'm saying to the LHINs with this motion is to allocate the funding so that we can at least start temporarily fixing this problem. We have the talent. We have the room. We have the expertise.

Suzanne Johnston, who is the president of the NHS, has come out and said that they agree with this, that they know it's an issue. They need some help to fix it. That, I think, is probably the most important thing to happen, going forward. I don't think there's anybody here that says that 112 days is acceptable in the province of Ontario.

I really want to give credit to the NHS for realizing that it's a problem and working with us to try to come up with solutions. I do appreciate the fact that I talked to the health minister and he was here today to listen to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this motion at the end of private members' public business.

1520

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT
(COUNCILLOR PREGNANCY
AND PARENTAL LEAVE), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX MUNICIPALITÉS
(CONGÉS DE MATERNITÉ
ET CONGÉS PARENTAUX
DES CONSEILLERS MUNICIPAUX)

Ms. Vernile moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act respecting pregnancy and parental leaves of municipal council members / *Projet de loi 46, Loi sur les congés de maternité et les congés parentaux des membres des conseils municipaux.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It is a pleasure and a privilege to lead the debate today on my private member's bill. It is titled Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act (Councillor Pregnancy and Parental Leave), 2016.

Essentially, this bill would extend maternity and parental leave for Ontario municipal councillors and mayors from the current 12 weeks up to 20 weeks. The Municipal Act as it is now written stipulates in section 259 that, "The office of a member of council of a municipality becomes vacant if the member ... is absent from the meetings of council for three successive months without being authorized to do so by a resolution of council." So parents who sit on municipal councils in Ontario and who take a leave after a baby is born or adopted can lose their seat after three months unless they can get approval from their council colleagues to extend the leave.

There are many municipal leaders and stakeholders right across Ontario who feel that this provision is unfair, it's antiquated, and it's not family-friendly. Some of them have joined us here today for the second reading of my private member's bill.

It was in June of this year, during a meeting with the mayor of Kitchener, Berry Vrbancovic, that he raised this issue with me. Berry said that a private member's bill would be a good idea, to bring clarity to the statute on leaves for members of council within the Municipal Act.

The inspiration for this bill is Councillor Kelly Galloway-Sealock, who would be here with us today, except that she just had her third child a week ago. Logan is her baby boy who was just born, her third boy. So she couldn't be here, but she asked me to read this statement for her. Here's part of her statement:

"Daiene,

"I wish I could be there today to support this bill moving forward. However, the arrival of my third son only eight days ago keeps me at home. As a mom of three young children, all of which I have had during my

time on Kitchener city council, I believe it is important for the Municipal Act to recognize and acknowledge maternity and parental leave.

“I believe it is important to implement change so it’s clear and transparent for any person wishing to run for municipal office. I feel strongly that changes to the act should be clear and omit the ability for the municipal council to have the authority to vote for a leave extension. With the addition of any language around maternity and parental leave in the Municipal Act, I believe it will bring the act up to current standards.”

If this amendment is adopted, Speaker, future political moms and dads across Ontario can thank Kelly for her advocacy.

As I mentioned, it was the mayor of Kitchener who brought this to my attention. Berry Vrbanovic is here today for the second reading, and I would ask that Berry stand so that we could acknowledge him. Berry has been a champion for this cause.

Also with him are a couple of Kitchener city councillors: Sarah Marsh and Bil Ioannidis. They’re being shy; they are not standing. We also have making the trip Paul Grivicic, who is the chief of staff for the mayor.

That ride down the 401 is always challenging, so I really appreciate that you are here today.

Speaker, the municipal leaders who are here with us are committed public servants who serve their communities with dedication, intelligence and passion.

When you look at other public officials in federal office and at the provincial level, and all other public service employees, they’re entitled to maternity and parental leave that is typically up to a year in length.

As elected representatives, we do share the concern of how to serve our constituents if we’re away on a leave, whether it’s to tend to a new child or a leave due to illness. For Kelly, who had her first child in 2013, she continued to attend to constituents’ needs and city hall matters by email and by telephone. She was never really too far away from the action. She even took her sons to council meetings.

But we know all too well the demands that are placed on us as elected representatives. These conditions often serve as a barrier to people who might want to get into a career in politics, and I would say that those barriers are especially onerous for women. Here at Queen’s Park as provincial politicians, we face long hours and being away from our families.

That’s why many aspiring politicians cut their teeth, if you will, at the local level. They figure they don’t have to commute to Toronto or to Ottawa, so serving locally would appear to be more family-friendly. But how family-friendly is it if new parents are only allowed 12 weeks at home after the birth of a child or the adoption of a child?

The International Labour Organization, the ILO, states that the most recent standard on maternity leave mandates a minimum leave of “at least 18 weeks.” According to the ILO, when the leave is too short, mothers may feel that they’re not ready to go back to work.

They’re going to miss their baby, and consequently, they might quit their jobs, dropping out of the workforce. When a woman is out of paid work for a very long period of time, it can hinder her ability to jump back in and compete with her colleagues, who, in the meantime, have advanced in the workplace. It damages her ability to be an earner in her family and to support her household.

For employees who are covered by the province’s Employment Standards Act, they have a right to take pregnancy and/or parental leave of up to 37 weeks. When we make this investment supporting a new parent, it’s an investment in society. We know that health and education outcomes for children who are raised in stable homes where the parents are earning dependable incomes are more positive.

Speaker, when I consulted with the Ministry of Labour on its Changing Workplaces Review, pregnancy and parental leave is a very important issue. I’ve been assured that, going forward, the government is committed to further consultations with expert stakeholders on a number of areas under the wage gap strategy, including parental leave.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, has also waded into this debate. AMO develops a variety of advocacy positions that matter to Ontario municipalities. Recently, AMO put a review request before the province concerning the Municipal Act. I’ll read it to you. AMO is asking the province to: “Develop a provision to clearly provide parental leave for mayors and councillors by cross-referencing the parental leave legislation. This should be done in such a manner that parental leave does not require authorization from council under the Municipal Act, and that it does not constitute an absence from meetings of section 259(1).” AMO represents municipal leaders in over 400 villages, towns, regions and cities right across the province of Ontario. Members of this organization want to see parental leave references in the Municipal Act.

The organization Equal Voice provides interesting snapshots on elected women in Canada, and they do it by the numbers. It’s a national multi-partisan group that is dedicated to seeing more women elected in Canada. They do this by tracking the number who are out there. So our federal Parliament and provincial and territorial Legislatures right across the country keep these stats. Here’s what I can tell you: We’ve seen significant increases of elected female representatives on the political scene. The federal cabinet of Justin Trudeau is now made up of 50% women. The way he explained this a year ago, when he appointed his cabinet, he said simply, “Because it’s 2015.” Three Canadian provinces are currently led by women, including Christy Clark of BC, Rachel Notley of Alberta and our very own Kathleen Wynne here in the province of Ontario.

But at the local level, the number of women in politics continues to underwhelm. Across Canada, women make up only 26% of municipal councillors and only 16% of mayors. Those figures are substantially below targets that are set by the United Nations. Thirty per cent is what you

need to create what it refers to as a “critical mass” in order to produce public policy that reflects and represents specific concerns, because when you have women who are sitting at the decision-making table, they’re going to advance very different issues. Female leadership takes us in a different direction. But in order to get women to the table to even consider a career in politics, there need to be accommodations to reflect life’s realities such as pregnancy and motherhood.

One other issue I believe that we need to put under some scrutiny is the current stipulation that municipal council members who do want to take a leave have to go before their peers on council to ask for time off, for pregnancy or parental leave to care for a new child. Does this strike you as being somewhat demeaning? Does it place women, in particular, in a diminished position, as they have to get approval from their colleagues? What if the council says no?

We should look to our neighbours in the province of Quebec, where, earlier this year, they introduced a private member’s bill, Bill 594, that is similar to my bill.

1530

Because of the nature and conditions of the work that we do as politicians, when you look at federal, provincial and city hall chambers, oftentimes—and I don’t mean this to insult anyone; this is the reality—you see a lot of older people, you see mainly men, and you see limited diversity. I believe we need to start asking ourselves, what can we and what should we be doing to invite more diverse representation to the decision-making table?

Bill 46 will send a very clear message to would-be female councillors and mayors that they can serve their local communities and also be parents. The two should not be mutually exclusive.

I do want to thank the members of council from the city of Kitchener who made their way here today to support this bill.

To the other stakeholders who I believe support this: We very much appreciate their positive voices and the messages that they have sent.

Lastly, I want to thank Kelly Galloway-Sealock, who may be watching this at home right now in Kitchener with her three young boys, including her youngest, a new infant. By the way, her father, Tom Galloway, is a Waterloo regional councillor in my region, and he is a first cousin to my husband, John. So there’s a great deal of interest in our family in seeing this bill go through. I know that we’re officially referring to this as Bill 46, but, unofficially, I’m going to call it Kelly’s bill. I want to thank her for her advocacy, for being a trailblazer in the city of Kitchener and in the province of Ontario.

I very much urge my colleagues in the House to support this bill. Why? Because it’s the right thing to do. Why? Because it’s 2016.

We have so many barriers that currently exist that are preventing women from getting involved in politics. Trying to accommodate at the local level women who want to get involved in politics and not fear the concept of having a baby and then being fired from your job

because of that, because you don’t get to council meetings after three months—This is just absurd. We need to fix this.

Berry, thank you very much for holding my feet to the fire. I’m doing this for you and council and for Kelly.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I feel just like I’m at home here. I see some friends from Kitchener. I’d like to, obviously, introduce them on behalf of my colleagues: Mayor Berry Vrbanovic; councillors Bil Ioannidis and Sarah Marsh; and of course, we would have to bring chief of staff Paul Grivicic along. Welcome, folks, to Queen’s Park. It’s good to see you here. And, yes, Ms. Kelly Galloway-Sealock is likely also watching at home, so I’ll say hi to her as well.

I didn’t want to miss this opportunity to lend my voice to support parents across the province to access the important positive benefits made possible by parental leave, whether a man or woman, private sector employee or public servant.

Speaker, while, as we’ve heard, it was a local Kitchener councillor and mother’s situation that helped bring this legislative omission to light, there is no doubt that the continued lack of ability for elected councillors to access parental leave has long required remedy that we can hopefully work toward today. As my colleague from Kitchener Centre has explained, Kitchener councillor Kelly Galloway-Sealock, like many councillors with new additions to the family before her, is forced to continue her council duties without any respite to enjoy the benefits we should all have, to spend those vital early weeks with our newborns. Instead of ensuring that that parental right is enjoyed by workers across this province, the Municipal Act is mute and provides no recognition of parental leave; in fact, it’s quite the opposite. The act directs that if a council member is absent for three months in a row, the office becomes vacant unless other councillors authorize the absence. To be clear, no one should have to ask permission from their colleagues—or sometimes in council chambers—to access the essential right that all parents have across the province of Ontario.

Speaker, as a proud parent myself, I can tell you that my wife utilized her rights to parental leave for my sons Murphy and Lincoln and, most recently, my daughter, Rosy. She’s back at work in the workforce—that’s my wife; Rosy has got a few years to go, in fact—but she wouldn’t trade those special and vital early months with our children for the world. The bonds and health and social benefits that emerge during those early weeks and months are an essential part of any parent’s connection with their child. I’m thankful Sarah had the opportunity to access parental leave that should be available to all.

In addition to the fact that the current situation denies parents a right to leave that should be open to all, there is also no doubt that this situation places a very real and sometimes insurmountable hurdle that prevents more women from participating in local politics. As my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo has written to the

minister, “Women make up only 16% of mayors in Canada and 24% of municipal councillors.”

There’s something very wrong with those numbers, Speaker. One of the contributing factors is the fact that parental female entrants into politics are faced with the prospect of spending those vital early-development and bonding weeks with their future children in council chambers rather than in the comfort of their home. It shouldn’t be that way. I think it’s pretty obvious how the prospect of baby-raising at city hall rather than at home acts as a strong deterrent preventing women from the pursuit of political office.

In the case of Kelly Galloway-Sealock, the first Kitchener councillor to give birth while in office, she has only missed one council meeting for each of her three children—sometimes brought the baby with her to meetings, in fact. If she had to breastfeed, she’d go to another room while watching the debate live on video.

She soldiered on, Speaker, but I hope that today we can help to ensure that she will be the last to have to make those choices. As Luisa D’Amato of the Waterloo Region Record recently said, “Don’t you want people with young children, many of whom use these services more than anyone else, helping to make these decisions? Don’t you want a municipal council to look like the community it represents?”

As Ms. D’Amato concluded, “It won’t happen unless these barriers are removed.” I look forward to supporting Bill 46 to help remove those barriers today.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Of course, New Democrats will be fully supporting this bill. I think my primary emotion, if you will, when I first met with the mayor of Kitchener and the COO about this very issue is that I was just generally surprised that, in the province of Ontario in 2016, there is a fundamental issue at our council tables where women who are seeking parental leave must ask permission to have that leave.

For those of you who know the work that we have been doing in Waterloo region around our municipal campaign school and around working with Equal Voice, this is clearly a barrier to women feeling comfortable and having an inclusive work environment around those council tables. I think we can all agree, fundamentally, that what women do bring to the table—their talents, their skills, their knowledge, the way that they look at issues across this province through the lens of their lives, of their lived experience—is of great value.

But I have to tell you that I have had some issues with bringing this very important issue to the minister. On August 5, I wrote to Minister Mauro and I raised this issue—this was August 5, 2016—around parental leave for elected officials. I explained the situation, which I was genuinely surprised at. I thought perhaps he was unaware of it as well. The Municipal Act is a pretty big act, and it’s convoluted in many respects.

The response I got back from the minister—I have to tell you, I was taken aback. Perhaps the minister was also

taken aback. He wrote to me, “Thank you for your letter regarding the Municipal Act, 2001”—this act clearly needs to be updated.

“The province recognizes municipalities as responsible and accountable governments with the authority to make decisions within their own jurisdictions based on local values and goals.” Well, I think that including women at the council table is a collective provincial value and goal, not to be determined at council table from council table. Then he goes on to say: “A municipal council may”—may—“choose to pass a resolution consenting to the absence of a member for over three consecutive months to accommodate parental leave.”

This language, for me—for those of you who know me, language matters. When the minister who has this responsibility, which is a big responsibility, uses language like the council can determine the “local values and goals” and they “may choose” to be permissive in this regard, you can understand that that would raise some red flags for us.

In turn, I of course wrote an open letter to the minister, because I was obviously taken aback.

Since that point, I’ve had the opportunity to reach out to other councillors across the province. Of course, I would like to reflect the voices of my local council as well, just as the member from Kitchener Centre has.

Mayor Jaworsky, the mayor of Waterloo, has said to me, “Municipal public service is about serving citizens, whether individuals or families. There should be no barriers to serving your community, and people who are growing their family should be fully welcomed. Moreover, the decision to spend time with a new family member should be in their own hands, not in others.

“I am fully supportive of this welcoming change.”

1540

This is a fairly new mayor who was also, quite honestly, I think, taken aback that this was a practice in the province of Ontario.

The former mayor, Brenda Halloran, a mentor of mine, says, “One of the barriers women face in entering the political world is the issue of the current lack of maternal leave and the challenges they face in trying to balance the needs of their family with the Municipal Act.

“In its current form, there is no recognition of parental leave. It’s truly difficult to understand why, until now, this has been accepted. This needs to be challenged and changed. This does not reflect the needs of women who wish to serve as municipal politicians.” I fully agree with that.

She goes on to say, “It is hard to believe that this is an issue in 2016, and it is critical for changes to be made to the Municipal Act to remove this barrier for women. Our outdated Municipal Act needs to be changed. The time is now.” I do share the sense of impatience that the mayor has conveyed.

Finally, a friend of mine and a former councillor, Councillor Karen Scian, writes, “As a former Waterloo city councillor, I am enormously proud of Kitchener city councillor Kelly Galloway-Sealock for the work that she

has done to advocate for young families and the need to level the playing field for women in politics. Our elected officials should be a reflection of the citizens that they serve. In order for this to be a reality, systemic barriers to participation must be addressed and removed.”

What’s happening today, as I see it, Madam Speaker, is that we are starting this process of removing one of those barriers, but more importantly, I hope that this is actually just the beginning, because this is an opportunity for the minister who’s responsible for municipal affairs to open up this piece of legislation in a holistic way. Once we’ve started talking about these barriers around having to ask permission to have parental leave for women—the last time I checked, it still is only women who can have babies in the province of Ontario. I verified that. Until we address some of these barriers and then when we open up this door, we will find that there are some systemic barriers that exist today.

These include the breastfeeding of a child in council chambers, for instance. I know there is a councillor from Oshawa, Councillor Amy McQuaid-England, who was asked to leave. Breastfeeding is legal in the province of Ontario. Female politicians should have the right to breastfeed and to have reasonable accommodations made, to ensure they can be included in the process.

This may also lead to, I hope, a discussion around alternative voting matters, so that women can truly be at the table even if they can’t be at the table.

Now, this is interesting because, as you know, I was a former school board trustee in the province of Ontario, as were you, as were many people. In fact, a lot of women find their way into politics by joining the school council and then the regional school council. Then they find themselves suddenly elected to the school board, and it’s a huge shock. It’s very valuable work that they do. There are some accommodations that trustees around our school board tables make for trustees. This is a practice that I would encourage the minister to look at.

Once this door is opened, as it will be, because this bill will pass today, we have to look at the fact that school board trustees across the province—there’s gender equity. If you look at the city councillors, we have not reached gender equity at all, as was referenced in my first point. But in school board trustees, there’s almost a 50-50 split, which is a great opportunity to examine how that model is working. There is a tipping point. There is a critical mass which happens. Because there is a gender split for public English school board trustees, we should be looking at eliminating barriers to that level of municipal politics as well.

The issue of encouraging women to enter into the political arena is an ongoing battle. It is an arena which is sometimes hostile. It is not inherently family-friendly. When you look at our city councils across the province, they are not reflective of the populations that they serve based on gender, based on culture, based on race, based on religion. We should be actively, truly, in order to strengthen our democracy, opening up those doors and ensuring that whatever systemic barriers exist, we address them.

I think it’s very clear that the practice, as it stands in the province of Ontario, where a female councillor has to ask permission for parental leave is fundamentally a sexist practice, it is a discriminatory practice and it must end. I hope that today’s passage of the bill will prompt the minister to address this in a very holistic way. I think, because it is 2016, this is the opportune moment to make that happen.

There are no good arguments on the other side, trust me. I’ve looked at them all. If we look at the fact that only 16% of the mayors in the province of Ontario are women, if we look at the fact that only 24% of municipal councillors are women, both of those numbers are well below that 30% estimated by the United Nations to meet that critical mass that I mentioned.

I think that when you open up this conversation, as this bill has done, and as Kelly Galloway-Sealock has done—I just want to commend her, because it takes courage to speak up on issues like this; it really does. Also, she has a very supportive council. I had the opportunity to discuss this with her and to thank her for her courage and to also find out how supportive her other members are, like councillors Marsh and Ioannidis, and councillors Etherington and Schneider, as well.

There is a movement here. This is where grassroots politics meets provincial leadership. If we can only get the Minister of Municipal Affairs to fast-track this before it’s 2017, then I think that we can all feel very good about making this step in the right direction to end a very sexist practice and to work toward gender parity and gender equality in the political system in the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to stand, and thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for bringing this issue forward, because I think it’s an absolutely critical issue.

As a municipal politician myself, as a town councillor, I often struggled with the issue of attracting quality candidates to an election. What I often found was that there were a lot of people who had very strong political beliefs, political views, they knew what needed to be done, but they did not feel welcomed at the table. I’m talking primarily about a number of great women in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora who I would love to have sitting around the council table but who did not feel that it was an institution that made them feel welcomed.

First and foremost, this is about inclusivity, of making sure that women, especially moms with young families, feel that they can be at the table and not be penalized.

I am delighted that the bill would extend maternity and parental leave for Ontario municipal councillors and mayors from the current three months to five months. I know there is the provision currently, within the Municipal Act, that, with the permission of council, a woman could have her leave extended, we’ll say, by an additional amount of time, but it shouldn’t be at the behest of the council. It shouldn’t be at the will of council that that

right be given, that that permission be granted. This needs to be something that is enshrined in law.

I'm so delighted that the MPP for Kitchener Centre brought this forward and brought this to our attention, because I think it speaks to—and I've had some offline discussions with our MPP about things that we need to do, that we, in the broader sense, need to do to increase the participation of women in politics, whether it be in Ottawa, Queen's Park here in Toronto or around municipal council tables across Ontario. It really speaks to that larger issue of making women feel more welcome to be serving on municipal council. It speaks to that issue of inclusivity.

1550

Women should not be penalized simply because they bear children. We all, as a society, benefit from that. Through all sorts of oversight, they are too often penalized simply because they have children. That's not right. We're not doing ourselves a good service. We're not making sure that our communities are being well served.

If we have policies in place, if we have regulations in place that exclude 51% of the population, it doesn't make sense to me. We live in a time where it really is all hands on deck. We need everybody participating in our political process-making. It saddens me when I work hard to try and find some good people to sit on a town council, and they're just not interested because they don't find that process to be family-friendly.

I think this bill, Bill 46, the Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, will go a long way to making women feel more included, to making them feel more welcome in the process.

I'll leave my comments there for now. I know that others of the caucus have more to say.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today and speak on this bill. It's a very important topic. It's presented by the member from Kitchener Centre. Basically, we're talking today about people who are serving on councils who need some kind of support for maternity leave if they're adopting or if they're having a child themselves.

We want to do everything we can to support families in Ontario. I think that all sides of the House can agree on that on a Thursday afternoon. We want to ensure that women have the help and support they need in order to have a rich and fulfilling life and also bond with their newborn children.

Where it becomes a little tricky is that we're talking about elected officials—and we're elected officials here. We understand that there's a certain commitment that we take when we agree to represent our constituents and to have elected office, and that there are things going on in councils that you can't just put aside for a few months while somebody is on maternity leave.

We would need to ensure, if we were asking the municipalities in some manner to set up a system where women who are serving on councils at the municipal

level could have the support that they need to take some time off, we're not going to have stalemates, because a lot of councils, obviously, have an odd number. If one person is missing and it's a very close vote, that development cannot proceed.

While there are proxy votes and there's use of technology, you have to wonder if a system could be set up maybe at home so that, instead of just taking time off completely, maybe there's something in between. I'm just throwing out suggestions, because that's what we do here during private members' bills. Is there a system where, by video conference, you can be part of that council meeting, at least for votes in some way, to use all of the technology that we have at our disposal? If the municipalities say, "Well, we don't have the ability to set up that kind of technology or even the money to set up that kind of technology; we would need support from the province," perhaps that's something that can be looked at.

I'm looking forward to this bill going to committee and hearing all those kinds of suggestions, from municipalities, yes, but also technology experts who are out there, who can come and bring us all of their ideas on how we can try as much as possible to help women who are holding elected office to still participate, not just completely disappear for months at a time, but to participate and find that kind of compromise. Maybe they're not there for full council meetings with deputations and things like that, but at least to be there for some of the discussions, meetings and things like that.

We know that people often watch at home on the Internet. They watch municipal council meetings. If they can be watching it from home, then somebody can certainly be using technology to be part of that meeting as—pardon?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Maybe not.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Maybe not. Well, I would think that is a possibility that we should examine, how people can—the minister is weighing in and she doesn't think that's possible.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I didn't say that.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Okay.

In my opinion, when we are elected to serve here, we are definitely making a commitment for the term that we are elected to serve. I have to question what time limit would be acceptable not just for pregnancy or adoption, but even for illness.

We want to be supportive of our colleagues and we would want our colleagues to be supportive of us if we have to be away for an extended period of time to take care of our own health or to take care of a close family member. I would ask the House to maybe think about that while we're discussing this bill. What is a reasonable amount of time if somebody is away for illness? What is a reasonable expectation for constituents to have representation in the House—not just to designate constituency staff to take care of things, but in the House, to be able to debate bills? If somebody is missing, say, for a year from the House, almost completely not participating in debates, is that acceptable to their constituents?

Should there be a panel? Not an official committee, but should we have some kind of panel or task force where, when somebody is away for an extended period of time, all parties evenly—not just the majority government making that decision, but all parties have representatives on a panel to sit down and say, “You seem to be struggling. What can we do as colleagues to support and help you? Do you need to maybe have your desk moved down or help, or more room or a different kind of chair?” I know that we have put ramps in the building over the years. We’ve put more elevators in the buildings over the years. Maybe there are things we could be doing to help each other when we need that help—but then to politely say to the member, “You know what? You’ve been away for almost a year. We’ve hardly seen you. What is your expectation? Can you give us a date when you’ll return? Would you agree to perhaps give up your seat if you’re not able to meet that deadline?”

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m glad that I was able to weigh in on a few—I’m trying to think outside the box, and it’s one of the reasons I like to be here: to try to think outside the box and to raise my concerns. Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for bringing us into this very important discussion.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It’s an honour to be able to rise in support of Bill 46, the private member’s bill from the member for Kitchener Centre.

Madam Speaker, it boggles the mind that nobody has thought of this to date. As has been mentioned, this is a fundamental matter of inclusivity and equity. Throughout workplaces in this province, women and men are entitled to parental leave. Whether it’s a natural birth or an adoptive circumstance—

Interruption.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: So whether it’s such an oversight—

Miss Monique Taylor: A point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Hamilton Mountain, what’s the point of order?

Miss Monique Taylor: There is a BlackBerry that is buzzing and being picked up by the speaker, which is a health and safety matter for the people who monitor our microphones.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): That’s not a point of order.

The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It’s such a fundamental matter that has been omitted for so many years. It’s high time that this was brought about.

I served on municipal council for 17 years, and I can never remember a circumstance where, when a member asked to be excused for an absence, whether it was for an illness, business travel or whatever circumstance—I can never remember that request being refused. In fact, I can recall one member of council having a significant illness and missing close to a year’s worth of council. That

absence was excused, as I think was reasonable to do in the circumstances.

Perhaps we should be looking at the ability for members of council to be able to participate electronically in debates, but that’s a different issue. What’s before us today is that, in 2016, no woman or man should have to go begging their colleagues on a city council to be excused because they’ve had a child. Certainly, pregnancy is not an illness. You don’t need to be explaining it and asking for special accommodation.

1600

This is something that I will be supporting fully, the amendment to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act, to make sure that women and men are able to have the same kind of accommodation in a municipal council as they would have in every other workplace. Speaking about the issue of inclusivity, we do need more women participating in the political process. If this forms yet another barrier or perceived barrier to women entering municipal politics, it’s one that we should knock down as quickly as possible, that we should knock down before the 2018 municipal election, so that women across this province know that their desire to have a family is not going to be an impediment to being able to serve on a city council.

My friend from Beaches–East York raised a good point with me while we were sitting here: Men should be encouraged to take their rightful parental leaves as well. It’s only that way that we will really build a more inclusive and equitable society—when we all accept that we have equal responsibilities as parents and equal rights. It shouldn’t be frowned upon or discouraged.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member from Kitchener Centre for an excellent private member’s bill, one that we should all be supporting.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 46, An Act respecting pregnancy and parental leaves of municipal council members, which has been introduced by the member for Kitchener Centre. It is a real pleasure to speak to this motion. There isn’t much time, of course, Madam Speaker, as you know, but I want to welcome the representatives from the city of Kitchener who are here. It’s great to have you in the Legislature as this debate unfolds.

Madam Speaker, for the years 1999 to 2007, I was privileged to represent the riding of Waterloo–Wellington in this Legislature, and I represented a southwestern portion of the city of Kitchener. Toward the end of my tenure as the member for Waterloo–Wellington, in 2006, a new councillor was elected in a ward that mostly overlapped the part of Kitchener that I was privileged to represent. Her name was Kelly Galloway. I remember speaking to her to congratulate her. Of course, as we know, she’s still effectively representing constituents in her community on the Kitchener city council, and it is her experience and her situation that has brought to light this

issue. I think it is important that we recognize that we need to ensure that municipal councillors who might have children and who need to take up to three months of maternity leave shouldn't have to beg their council colleagues to ensure that their seat isn't declared vacant.

I think this is a bill that we can all support, in principle, but I think it's also important that we seek the input of other interested organizations and individuals. I would hope, if this bill does pass second reading and is sent to a standing committee, that we hear, most significantly, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, to ensure that we can ensure that we are getting this right, refine the bill, perhaps, and bring it back to the House for further discussion and debate. I look forward to that.

Again, I congratulate and commend the member for Kitchener Centre for bringing forward this important issue this afternoon.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise to speak to the bill before us from the member from Kitchener Centre, the parental leave bill for municipal elected officials.

I will confess, like a lot of people in this House who have not had prior municipal experience, that I was shocked to find out that not just women but men need to go to council to get this kind of leave. I was stunned. I was stunned to hear that. So of course I'm very supportive of this.

I do want to say congratulations to Councillor Kelly Galloway-Sealock on the birth of her third child. I love the suggestion about nicknaming this "Kelly's bill." I also want to acknowledge the folks here from Kitchener as well today. Thank you for being here on a Thursday afternoon. I know it looks like there are not a lot of people in the House, but this is where a lot of important things happen, where these good ideas come forward from MPPs through private members' business and motions.

Another person I want to give a shout-out to before I forget is Lynn Dollin. Lynn is the deputy mayor of Innisfil, and she was recently acclaimed as the president, I guess you'd call it, of AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—great female leader there. Lynn and I and the Premier had a very brief conversation about the importance of women in politics, and particularly municipal politics. We heard a bit about the statistics, about the low number of females who are councillors and mayors.

The important thing to remember about this bill is that this is not a women's bill. This is a parent bill. This bill is for leave for the pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child by a member of council in Ontario. I think it's pretty straightforward.

I have to respond to some of the comments from the MPP from Thornhill. I just can't let them go. I agree to more input. I agree to getting it to committee. But I'm really concerned about the notion of some suggestion that people on leaves have to start thinking about using

technology, have to think about working when they're on a leave. My position is that when you are on a leave, yes, there has to be a discussion with that person about, do they want to engage with work or not? But I don't think there should be any pressure. There certainly shouldn't be any obligation to be voting, reading motions and preparing things or whatever she is suggesting, these time limits.

People need to go on leave for a variety of reasons. We have seen it right here in this Legislature: people on maternity leave, people who are ill. We're not asking them to come in and vote. We're not even raising that expectation. If they are away, they are away. I know we have constituents to be accountable to, but constituents are real people who recognize that we're real people. I don't think reasonable people would expect someone on authorized leave to be somehow pressured into voting. Bring the ideas on. If someone wants to do that when they're on leave, that's one thing, but that should be a choice, Speaker, not a strong suggestion.

I again want to close by thanking the member from Kitchener Centre for introducing this bill. I'm very supportive of it. And again, congratulations to Councillor Galloway-Sealock for inspiring this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Kitchener Centre to wrap up.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to begin by thanking the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, the Minister of Housing, the member for Thornhill, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills and the minister responsible for women's issues.

Speaker, I really appreciate all of these supportive comments that we have heard this afternoon on Bill 46. It's very encouraging to see that we have so much support for this bill. We don't often agree on things, but this afternoon you have seen how, in co-operation, we are all adding our voices to a change that we want to see go ahead.

There should be a specific reference in the Municipal Act on parental leave; we've decided that. We think that 20 weeks is agreeable; we've said yes to that. Councillors and mayors should not have to go before their colleagues to ask permission to take a leave; we're in agreement on that.

When I initially talked to our mayor about this issue back in June of this year, I have to tell you, I was absolutely astounded when he brought to my attention the current situation with the Municipal Act. I promised that we would work together to address this issue. So here we are doing that today.

We've talked about the barriers that do exist that currently prevent women from wanting to get involved in local politics, whether it's the long hours that you have to work or time spent away from family, and the acrimony that you sometimes see. But at the local level you say to yourself, "At least I don't have to commute and go far away to Queen's Park in Toronto, or Ottawa to deal with federal politics. I'm going to serve locally." But we need

to eliminate the barriers that are keeping them from wanting to serve locally, which currently is this omission within the Municipal Act.

1610

I'm glad we're in agreement that we need to advance this. I want to thank everyone for all of their positive support this afternoon. I thank Kelly Galloway-Sealock for being a champion of this. Also, to my local councillors of the city of Kitchener, thank you so much for being here.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTING REWARDS POINTS ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PRÉSERVATION
DES POINTS DE RÉCOMPENSE
(MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LA
PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot number 13, standing in the name of Mr. Potts. Mr. Potts has moved second reading of Bill 47, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to rewards points. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to look to the member about referring this bill. To which committee?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, it would only be just to send it to the justice policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Justice policy? Do we agree? Agreed. Congratulations.

HEALTH CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Gates has moved private member's notice of motion number 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT
(COUNCILLOR PREGNANCY
AND PARENTAL LEAVE), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX MUNICIPALITÉS
(CONGÉS DE MATERNITÉ
ET CONGÉS PARENTAUX
DES CONSEILLERS MUNICIPAUX)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Vernile has moved second reading of Bill 46, An Act respecting

pregnancy and parental leaves of municipal council members. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm looking to the member to see which committee this bill will be referred to.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Madam Speaker, to regulations and private bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Regulation and private bills committee: Does everybody agree? Agreed. Congratulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND
MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES
EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Mrs. McGarry moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

It is my privilege to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township. Today I have the honour of speaking to the Legislature on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. I introduced this bill to the Legislature on October 6, so on behalf of myself and my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—we will be sharing our time here today. He'll be speaking a bit later, but right now, I would like to speak to the aggregate resources side of the legislation.

If passed, this legislation would amend the Aggregate Resources Act. It would modernize and strengthen the regulation of aggregate pits and quarries in Ontario, improve environmental accountability and oversight, update fees and royalties, and improve information and participation in the application process. These proposed changes balance economic growth and job creation with a responsibility to protect vital resources like prime farmland and groundwater. This legislation, if passed, would allow Ontario to have a modern framework to oversee the management of aggregate resources in our province.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is the lead provincial ministry responsible for the management of aggregate resources. For those who aren't aware, when we're talking about aggregate resources, we're talking

about substances like sand, gravel, clay, earth and rock extracted from pits and quarries. Aggregate is a finite resource that requires proper management to ensure its long-term availability to society.

The existing Aggregate Resources Act, or ARA, provides a legislative framework, regulation-making authority and overall requirements to control and regulate aggregate operations on crown and private lands; issue licences, permits and authorize changes to existing approvals; inspect aggregate operations and force compliance; require the rehabilitation of land from which aggregate has been excavated; and minimize adverse impacts on the environment related to aggregate operations.

Aggregate resources are the building blocks of our modern society. It's almost impossible to imagine our life without them. They play a critical role in the maintenance and construction of our infrastructure and are found throughout our province. They are used to build our roads and highways, playgrounds, water mains, subways, hospitals, airports, schools and the houses in which we live.

Additionally, the aggregate industry is an important part of our economy. The industry supports about 9,000 direct jobs and 9,600 indirect jobs in Ontario. It contributes almost \$1.4 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product. It's a fundamental building material for our province's construction industry and is used in many different sections of our economy.

Ontario's population is projected to grow by 4.2 million people by the year 2041. Our government is working to meet the demands that will come with that growth throughout the province. We are making the single largest investment in public infrastructure in the province's history: about \$160 billion over 12 years. The infrastructure needed for this growth will require a steady, consistent, accessible supply of aggregate resources.

To ensure we are removing and using this resource in a responsible way as we build Ontario up, it is important for Ontario to have a modern, effective and efficient framework for the management of aggregates. This proposed legislation, if passed, would allow for the creation of such a framework. I live on a road with two gravel pits on it in my township of North Dumfries. My township is one of the top aggregate-producing municipalities in the province of Ontario, so I understand from many different aspects how important this new proposed bill is.

I'd like to provide some context to the activities leading up to second reading of this recently proposed legislation. You may recall that in the year 2011, the Ontario government committed to review the ARA. Leading up to the fall of that year, there had been increasing concern from the public and stakeholders regarding aggregate extraction and the framework of the ARA. Several proposals for large-scale aggregate operations in southern Ontario heightened public and stakeholder interest in how the government regulates aggregate extraction. These proposals also brought to

attention the importance of protecting our agriculture and our groundwater resources.

The legislation has not been comprehensively reviewed since 1996. Some of the key changes at that time were the establishment of the Aggregate Resources Trust and the development and adoption of the aggregate resources of Ontario provincial standards. Since then, other minor changes have been made through good-government bills and adjustments to fees and royalties. New areas of the province have also been designated through regulation changes.

Against this backdrop, in March 2012 the Ontario Legislature passed a motion calling on the Standing Committee on General Government to review the Aggregate Resources Act. It asked the standing committee to report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to strengthening the act. The standing committee included representatives from all three political parties, including my parliamentary assistant, Joe Dickson, MPP for Ajax-Pickering. They completed their review and tabled their report in the Legislature in October 2013.

Extensive effort was made by the committee to create a comprehensive review of the current act, with recommendations on how our government could strengthen and improve the management and oversight of aggregate resources. My ministry reviewed the report and these recommendations. We did this in collaboration with all of our colleagues in the Ministries of Transportation; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; the Environment and Climate Change; Municipal Affairs; Northern Development and Mines; Infrastructure; Finance; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Tourism, Culture and Sport; and Economic Development and Growth.

In February 2014, we released the Ontario government's comprehensive response to the standing committee's report and recommendations, which supported the spirit and the direction of the recommendations. It also committed to further stakeholder and indigenous community engagement in order to develop solutions to address the problems highlighted by the committee.

1620

With input from these consultations, we began the process of developing policy and regulatory changes that build on the recommendations of the standing committee. The Premier's 2014 mandate letter to the then minister Bill Mauro made this activity a major priority, directing the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to bring forward legislative and regulatory changes to the ARA. I want to thank Minister Mauro, Minister Oraziotti and Minister Gravelle for their work in the past few years on this important file when they were Ministers of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Speaker, given their wide application, the way in which aggregates are managed in Ontario has direct and indirect implications for many people across the province. In developing this proposed legislation, we have intently listened to the views of a cross-section of stakeholders and people throughout Ontario.

The 38 recommendations of the Standing Committee on General Government were informed by information obtained through eight public hearings, written comments, site visits and research. In the fall of 2014, my ministry launched an extensive consultation process to gather further input from stakeholders, indigenous communities, organizations, municipal associations, experts and other ministries on topics that really relate to this very important provincial resource.

Aggregate resource management is an extremely complex policy area. We wanted to better understand the areas of concern and explore possible solutions. During our initial discussions, we considered:

- the approval process and requirements for new pit and quarry applications, and amendments to existing licences;
- potential impacts to agricultural land and ground-water resources;
- ways to enhance the rehabilitation of pits and quarries;
- the creation of incentives and removal of barriers to encourage greater recycling of aggregate materials; and
- how to set aggregate fees that are fair and equitable and reflect the importance of aggregate resources to our society.

Through this process, we began to establish a more clear understanding of future legislative and regulatory needs for aggregate resource management, ones that create predictability and certainty for all Ontarians.

In the fall of 2015, Ontario released a consultation document, *A Blueprint for Change*. The proposals described in the blueprint were developed in consideration of the recommendations of the standing committee and input from the fall 2014 discussions with stakeholders, indigenous communities, municipalities and organizations. The blueprint contained a range of proposals across the policy framework, including legislation, regulation, provincial standards and policies.

The proposed changes in the blueprint would provide stronger oversight, environmental accountability, standardized fees and royalties, and improved information and participation in application and amendment processes. The document was posted to the Environmental Registry for public comment and we held facilitated sessions with indigenous organizations and key stakeholders.

More than 400 submissions were received on the blueprint alone, an excellent participation rate for our consultation document, demonstrating a very strong interest in this issue. Many comments received related to fees, new application and amendment requirements, reporting requirements, and how proposed tools that would improve effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility would be implemented.

We also heard, among other things, that there is a strong interest to ensure that aggregate operations, including those approved in the past, are meeting today's environmental standards, and that our water resources and agricultural land are protected. And we heard that

reduced business predictability is a critical concern of the aggregate industry.

Ontario collected the valuable comments and recommendations received, including those from the standing committee, information gathered during public engagement and from other affected ministries. We combined it with my ministry's knowledge of previously identified delivery needs and policy gaps in the existing framework. We consciously recognized the need to maintain a modern and flexible Aggregate Resources Act framework for the future. From this, we developed the legislative amendments that have been presented to you in this bill. If passed, this information will also be used in the development of regulations to clarify details under the act.

Speaker, before I address the proposed changes in the legislation and the approach we took, I would like to recognize the significant contributions by those organizations that participated in our consultation processes and provided written submissions. These include municipalities, agricultural, environmental and community organizations, industry groups, indigenous communities and the public.

These include organizations like the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, which has been a long-standing partner with my ministry for many years, and Gravel Watch Ontario, a coalition composed of citizens groups, non-governmental organizations and individuals from across Ontario; representatives from the agricultural organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario; environmental stakeholders, including Environmental Defence, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, strong advocates for environmental protection; and Conservation Ontario, which represents and advocates for the interests of the province's 36 conservation authorities.

All of them provided valuable feedback on behalf of their members and thousands of Ontario residents. Likewise, indigenous communities and organizations have provided much meaningful input from the very start to this current major milestone. The ministry has held regional sessions for indigenous participants across the province and meetings with interested organizations and communities.

Ontario's municipalities have been engaged with my ministry on this matter since the fall of 2014. Municipalities play an extremely important role in managing aggregate resources on private land under the Planning Act and are impacted by a number of issues identified throughout our consultation process. All of these organizations, have been very active in our consultation process. Their valuable input has been considered in the development of the proposed legislation that's being addressed today, and their feedback will be considered in future development of changes to regulations and policy coming at a later date. While these organizations and communities have different interests in the subject of aggregate resources, they each understand the need for a strong and modern policy framework that will guide this industry into the future.

Aggregate resource management is a very complex policy area that requires a thoughtful approach. I've said it before, but it is worth mentioning again: It takes a tremendous amount of work in the background to come up with this kind of legislative approach. Stakeholders and members of the public have very different and often opposing views on aggregate management. My ministry has worked hard to find balanced and informed solutions for the best management for Ontario's pits and quarries, and that has been and continues to be our main priority.

Our government is very, very conscious of the need to properly manage Ontario's finite aggregate resources—that also protects our groundwater, prime agriculture land and, of course, our natural heritage. The introduction of this legislation is the first step in a phased approach to do just that: to balance economic growth with the responsibility to protect those vital resources. It will help provide predictability and consistency to the aggregate industry and also ensure affordable aggregate is available to continue to build our great province. It will also ensure the protection of our environment and agricultural lands, and that our water stays safe to drink.

1630

If passed, this bill would create a strengthened and modern framework for managing aggregate resources here in our province. Our government, as I said, is taking a phased approach to updating aggregate resource management in Ontario. Once the legislative changes are made through this bill—obviously, if passed—our ministry will then draft regulations which will flush out the details of this new framework. These changes will address concerns brought up by the public, stakeholders and indigenous communities regarding the management of aggregate operations here in the province.

I would now like to speak to the main changes proposed in the legislation.

Firstly, this legislation would provide the framework for stronger oversight in the management of aggregate operations. This would be accomplished through the introduction of new and enhanced tools for managing existing and future sites under the Aggregate Resources Act. These new tools will help us to deal with non-commercial and low-risk extraction activities more efficiently; for example, the extraction of aggregate for agricultural land improvement and small amounts for personal use. This change will allow the ministry to better focus its resources on larger aggregate extraction activities like commercial aggregate operations. Stronger oversight would also result from strengthened enforcement and offence provisions, including: increasing maximum fines to \$1 million, plus an additional \$100,000-per-day fine for each day the offence occurs; eliminating the minimum fine to allow the use of tickets for minor offences; and clearer provisions for false reporting.

Most of the aggregate that we use in Ontario comes from private land in southern Ontario, but the Aggregate Resources Act also provides the framework for managing aggregate resources and operations on crown land. This

bill includes proposed changes that would provide greater control of crown land aggregate and applications. This includes enabling the ministry to designate or set aside areas of crown aggregate or topsoil, where an aggregate permit will not be issued or where it will be reserved for a specific purpose. Such usage would include reserving aggregate for the construction and maintenance of our provincial highways.

Secondly, this legislation would provide the framework for updated fees and royalties. This framework would set the stage for equalizing fees between crown land and private land; charging royalty on sites that have also had ongoing mining lease; changing fee allocations; indexing fees and royalties to ensure they remain current into the future; and requiring existing fees for applications, transfers etc. to be established in regulation.

Thirdly, this bill would allow for enhanced environmental accountability for aggregate sites. It would do this by enabling the ministry to direct existing sites to conduct and submit the types of studies and reports that are required for new applications; requiring existing sites to provide information related to the operation of a pit or quarry; and adding conditions to existing sites to implement a source protection plan under the Clean Water Act. It would also create the flexibility to require customized plans to establish study and/or consultation requirements for unique applications and clarify, for new operations, that impacts to municipal drinking water sources be considered when making decisions for new licences and wayside permits.

Lastly, Speaker, the legislation would support improved information and participation in the application and the amendment processes by creating clearer processes to change existing approvals, allowing for customized consultation plans on applications, and enhancing record-keeping and reporting provisions by making them digital.

Future regulatory and policy changes for applications and amendments will also support improved participation of indigenous communities. For example, the blueprint included a proposal to encourage more pre-consultation with communities before an application proposal is submitted. The blueprint also proposed to require that the proponent provide separate documentation of notification and consultation activities undertaken with indigenous communities.

There will be opportunities to provide feedback on any new regulatory measures and changes to current regulations and policies through indigenous community and public consultation processes.

My ministry is committed to moving forward in a manner that is consistent with the constitutional recognition of existing aboriginal and treaty rights.

When will these proposed changes come into effect? Should the Legislature pass this bill, some changes would come into effect immediately, while others would have to be clarified in regulation.

Some of the key changes that would come into effect immediately include:

- enhanced enforcement provisions, including increasing the maximum penalties to \$1 million, plus an additional \$100,000 for each day the offence continues;

- changes that broaden the ministry's ability to require existing site licence and permit holders to submit information related to the operations; and

- establishing clear offence provisions for submitting false or misleading information in a report or in information that is required under the act, the regulations, a site plan or a licence or permit, and royalty payments for future sites that also have a mining lease.

Another set of changes would not come into effect until a later date. This includes new provisions for site plan amendments and the ability to direct existing sites to conduct and submit the types of studies and reports that are required for new applications.

The Standing Committee on General Government provided a series of recommendations that my ministry has taken into consideration. Some of those recommendations are reflected in the legislative changes that we are talking about today, such as standardizing provisions for site plan amendments and creating a framework for equalizing fees and royalties.

Some other recommendations will be addressed in the regulations if the bill is passed. For example, our proposed legislation includes a requirement for pits and quarries to report information on recycled aggregates, helping our ministry to gather more data and better data on how recycled aggregates are being used. I know that recycled aggregates are a very important topic to a number of members in the House, and I can assure you that our government will continue to promote and encourage the use of recycled aggregate resource materials in appropriate applications.

The Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Planning Act and the Endangered Species Act all influence aggregate operations, and I would like to take the opportunity to clarify that this proposed bill will have no impact on them. However, if Bill 39 is passed, my ministry will explore opportunities to streamline processes by aligning requirements for these pieces of legislation and incorporating them into our processes where appropriate.

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Likewise, in regard to Ontario's climate change action plan, the direct links to the province's climate change initiatives would come into the next phase of regulation development. Through the development of proposed changes to the regulations and provincial standards, we would look at where climate change considerations need to be specifically addressed in technical studies. These studies would support the review of and decision-making on aggregate applications. We would also be looking at other related matters such as rehabilitation, design and techniques, something that is specifically important to many municipalities in Ontario.

What are our next steps in this process? Speaker, there is much work yet to be done. The proposed bill has been posted on the Environmental Registry for public

consultation for a period of 60 days, ending on December 5, 2016. We will continue to seek input as the proposed act moves through the legislative process, and we encourage all interested parties to provide comments through the Environmental Registry.

Should this bill pass, we will continue to move forward with our phased approach, with changes to regulations and provincial standards, including changes to fees to come soon after passage. Through this process there will be continued opportunities for consultations with the public, stakeholders, municipalities and indigenous communities to ensure that we can create an aggregate management framework that works for the people of Ontario.

To wrap up, and before I give the floor over to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, this proposed legislation lays the foundation for a strong, modern Aggregate Resources Act policy framework that will support Ontario today and well into the future. Our collective efforts in developing this bill will contribute to a sustainable aggregates industry that supports continued economic prosperity for our province while protecting our environment and enhancing the quality of life for Ontario families. This framework will benefit both communities and companies equally.

I want to, again, thank the members of the public, indigenous communities, our stakeholders, our municipalities and fellow ministries for their ongoing support. I greatly appreciate their active, informed participation at all stages of the process, which has been substantial and constructive. And I want to thank my ministry officials for the work that they have undertaken and those of our other fellow ministries who have worked so hard on this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My thanks to my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. It's great to share this legislation with her. It's my pleasure as well to stand before the House today to address Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

As you know, Speaker, Bill 39 was first introduced in the House on October 6 as part of the ongoing modernization of the way that we manage resource extraction here in Ontario. This legislation would, if passed, help increase growth in the mining sector, and improve accountability and oversight in the aggregates industry. It's Ontario's goal through this bill to build a competitive and sustainable business environment using approaches that balance the province's social, economic and environmental goals and responsibilities.

If passed, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act will make amendments to modernize both the Aggregate Resources Act, as the minister so ably laid out, and of course the Mining Act, under our jurisdiction. These amendments will help ensure a strong and sustainable resource sector that is capable of competing and thriving in an increasingly changing and extremely competitive global market. For the mining industry, if the

bill is passed, it would enhance Ontario's global competitiveness by implementing a contemporary and efficient electronic system to register mining claims. These changes would make it easier to prospect and conduct exploration in the province of Ontario. I could not be more pleased that this legislation is receiving second reading today.

I would like to provide, if I may, a bit of context though, a little historical background on the mining sector in Ontario and that way emphasize the economic importance of exploration and mining to Ontario's economy, which of course is particularly relevant to northern Ontario communities that depend on the mining industry to establish, maintain and grow their local economies.

In 2006, as some in this Legislature may recall, we launched a mineral development strategy to help guide the sustainable management and stewardship of mineral resources in Ontario. Last December, we updated the strategy to ensure that we remain on the right path. That renewed strategy is our blueprint for the sector's growth over the next 10 years, and may I say our goal is really quite simple: We want Ontario to be the global leader in sustainable mineral development, something I think that everyone in this Legislature shares.

The mineral development strategy is a very comprehensive plan, created with input from representatives of exploration and mining companies, prospectors, northern and indigenous communities, and environmental organizations. The mineral development strategy provides a framework for how Ontario will build on our mining industry's well-earned global reputation and significant advantages that we do indeed have. The strategy helps foster a mineral sector that is globally competitive and attractive through continuous innovation in exploration, deep mining, integrated mine engineering, underground mine construction and environmental sustainability.

One of the mineral development strategy's major goals back in 2006 was a mining act that reflected 21st-century values. Enacting a modernized mining act was a signature achievement of that original strategy. The Mining Act was most recently amended through Bill 173, which received royal assent in 2009. Modernizing the Mining Act demonstrates Ontario's very strong commitment to position the province's mineral sector for growth. Modernizing the act and its regulations will help us optimize that goal in a steadily evolving, ever-changing global economy.

Speaker, the government has made it clear that we want to take a phased approach to implementing the ongoing efforts to modernize the Mining Act, because throughout this process we have worked closely with the mineral sector and other stakeholders, as well as with indigenous communities and organizations.

Phase 1 focused largely on private landowners, including requiring notice of claim-staking and a mining land tax exemption. Those phase 1 changes took effect in 2011.

Phase 2 implemented exploration plans and permits, planned clarification of aboriginal consultation requirements and criteria for sites of aboriginal cultural signifi-

cance—very important elements, and those are sites that could be withdrawn from claim-staking. We also introduced, at that time, the Mining Act Awareness Program, which is mandatory for anyone applying for a prospector licence, as well as for those supervising exploration plan or exploration permit activities. Those phase 2 changes came into effect in 2012-13.

So with the groundwork laid, our focus is now shifting to phase 3 of the modernization process. Let me elaborate just a bit on that. Phase 3 involves online mining claim registration to replace traditional paper-based and ground-staking processes. If passed, Bill 39 would enable the online registration of mining claims. It also proposes a streamlined, modernized, electronic mining lands administration system that would include enhanced electronic service delivery to clients. This new system would feature modern data management processes for use by industry clients and will replace the current paper-based administration process.

If enacted, Mr. Speaker, Bill 39 would make the necessary technical amendments to the Mining Act to effect these very exciting changes and move Ontario's Mining Act into the 21st century. We would, in fact, be keeping pace with other leading mining jurisdictions. Changes under Bill 39 will have a significant, positive impact on Ontario's mineral sector and on our provincial economy as a whole.

Phase 3 will be introduced in two stages. In the first stage, we will roll out the initial components of the new mining lands administration system. In this first stage, clients would be able to perform certain transactions online, like obtaining or renewing their prospector licences and completing the Mining Act Awareness Program.

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The second stage covers the remaining deliverables and would roll out shortly after the completion of the first stage. In this final stage, licensed prospectors will be able to search the status of mining lands in Ontario, register their claims online and transfer them without government assistance. In other words, clients could conduct business 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If this legislation passes, we will be able to implement online claim registration throughout the entire province, thereby replacing current ground-staking and paper-staking processes. This is quite a significant change, and the time has come to do exactly this.

What would happen instead is that licensed prospectors would register their claims online, selecting pre-set cells from a grid overlaid onto a map of Ontario that is viewed in a web browser. This method of online mining claim registration would be similar to systems that already exist or are being introduced in most Canadian mining jurisdictions.

Under Ontario's existing ground-staking method, it's simply a fact that it's often a physically demanding and time-consuming activity. Posts must be erected at each of the four corners of the territory, including a tag marking the claim. The tag must include their prospector licence

number, and the date and time that the staking occurred. Further tags and posts must be erected every 400 metres around the mining claim.

During staking, the boundaries of the mining claim must be clearly marked, which often requires blazing, clearing underbrush or felling trees to produce the line posts and markers. The fact is, Speaker, this activity can disturb or damage plant and animal habitats, and it can have a negative impact on the local ecosystems, as well as disrupt sites of spiritual and cultural significance to indigenous people.

Then, of course, there is simply the paperwork that's involved. Within 30 days of staking, the licensee must fill out, sign and file an application to record the claim with the provincial recording office in Sudbury. Under current policies, they can only do this by hand delivery, mail or fax. Current practices may require stakers to travel a great distance to hand deliver their applications and are restricted to government office hours.

Our proposed amendments truly modernize the basic foundation of a sector that is evolving technologically, but has operated, actually, under the same staking process for over a century now. The mining lands administration system would consolidate eight separate systems into one and streamline the ministry's administration of mining claims and mining lands. The new system would also enhance the existing notification process by providing for automatic, real-time notification to indigenous communities following claim registration and when mining claims are transferred.

At the same time, it's important to consider that clients and stakeholders, I think, would need some guidance and some support throughout the transition to a new system. We are very understanding and sensitive of that, and our ministry staff, in fact, are currently assisting clients in preparing for that potential transition.

Speaker, from our perspective, from my perspective and I trust from the perspective of all members of this Legislature, there are many benefits to modernizing the Mining Act. One example is that online registration would eliminate manual ground staking, as I've discussed, and the need to physically raise posts. It would help avoid issues that arise from accessing land to physically stake out claims.

The boundaries of mining claims would also be more accurate because they would no longer be defined by posts in the ground. Instead, those boundaries would be precise coordinates of cells on a predefined provincial grid with specific GPS coordinates. There would be, may I say, few, if any, boundary disputes.

A more level playing field would also result since everyone would have the same opportunity to register claims. Licensed prospectors with Internet access would be able to register mining claims in the same way as junior mining companies, and major miners, for that matter.

We're also taking steps to ensure that those without Internet access would not be at a disadvantage. We really have been sensitive and careful about this. Prospectors

would also be able to register claims at public workstations at their local library or government office, or have an agent register claims on their behalf. Increased broadband access across Ontario would support facilitation of online claim registration.

Ontario continues to invest in providing high-speed Internet across the province—that's a very important part of our economic development—with broadband expansion to homes and remote communities in the north. The work to transition to an online mining claim registration process and to get more remote communities online is happening as we speak.

Speaker, we feel that now is the time to implement these amendments, because technology provides us with tools that are user-friendly and readily accessible. Our government is absolutely committed to providing Ontarians with the best services possible. The mineral sector now demands up-to-date technologies to maintain Ontario's position as a top global mining jurisdiction. May I say, Speaker, that other Canadian jurisdictions are already modernizing their administrative structure.

A solid regulatory regime combined with our competitive tax framework will also motivate more investment in mineral exploration in Ontario. As I've already indicated, we've taken those key steps in phase 1 and phase 2, and our ministry people are working hard on planning for phase 3. For example, since exploration plan and permit regulations were implemented in phase 2, we have worked closely with indigenous communities, as well as with industry and other stakeholders, to help them adapt to their new processes.

Over the last two years, we've delivered presentations at important industry events, hosted dozens of information and outreach sessions, and discussed implementation of online mining claim registration. To gather input from all of our partners, we've met with representatives from industry, mineral sector organizations and stakeholders, including the Minister's Mining Act Advisory Committee—I'm very grateful for the great work they've done; the Ontario Prospectors Association; the Ontario Mining Association; and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. We've also carried out extensive engagement with First Nation groups, including Webequie First Nation, Temagami First Nation, the Matawa mineral technical table, the Union of Ontario Indians technical table, the Algonquins of Ontario and the Mushkegowuk mineral technical table. All input and all feedback has been considered during the development of the proposed amendments, and we will be continuing that very close engagement.

Let me say, Speaker, that the results of our extensive outreach indicate that most mining companies and industry organizations favour online mining claim registration and a streamlined land administration system. They consider it to be a more efficient, more accurate and cost-effective way to do business in a highly competitive industry.

I must tell the members of the House that we have also looked to other mining jurisdictions to see how they implemented online claim registration and to learn from

their experiences. I do want to point out that six Canadian provinces and territories currently operate online registration: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. Manitoba and Nunavut are currently in the process of implementing their own system. So we have learned from other jurisdictions and their experiences—this is an important point, Speaker—that a one-time, full conversion of claims is preferred over a long, drawn-out process. A one-time conversion is more effective, and the province would avoid having to maintain two systems over a number of years. If proposed amendments are passed, our ministry intends to undertake a one-time conversion of existing claims to cell-based claims.

We've also learned that the introduction of online registration in other jurisdictions has not resulted in large areas of land being tied up by a few companies or foreign interests. We've had that question asked, and that's why it was so important that we've learned from other jurisdictions. By adopting the best practices of other jurisdictions and providing comprehensive electronic services, Ontario would operate a technologically advanced mining lands administration system that supports a thriving mineral development sector.

I've just got to say, Speaker, that I am so excited about and proud of our ministry's work and progress with the ongoing process to modernize the Mining Act. We have been proactive. We have been progressive. We are determined to increase efficiencies with processes that would encourage more exploration and help foster more mineral discoveries. There's no question that we need to and we must keep Ontario competitive and ensure that mineral exploration and development remain viable for years to come.

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Interjection: Hear, hear.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much. I appreciate the support.

The bottom line is that modernization of the Mining Act strengthens our province. Our efforts are consistent with promoting and encouraging a thriving, dynamic mineral investment climate in Ontario. Modernization will further solidify Ontario's position among global mining jurisdictions and encourage more exploration activity, which is crucial and critical to the future development of new mines in our province. We need to make certain that the Mining Act supports that foundation.

Ontario's mineral sector is, without question, a vital component of our provincial economy and Canada as a whole. It is well known that the mineral sector landscape has been changing significantly under many challenges with the global economic downturn and the fluctuating investment climate. Like most other mining jurisdictions around the world, we are dealing with challenge and with change. But it's very important to point out, and it's a fact of which we're very proud, Ontario is still very much recognized as a global leader. The bottom line is, our hard work is paying off.

At a time when mine production is slowing down globally, Ontario has continued to forge ahead. We've

invested over \$165 million in Ontario mineral sector activities to date.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a very impressive thing.

We have led trade missions that have resulted in millions of dollars in sales of mining supplies and services, and we have attracted hundreds of qualified international investors from all stages of the mining investment cycle.

In 2015, Speaker—this is an incredibly important fact—we saw the value of mineral production reach \$10.8 billion, nearly twice what it was in 2003. That's pretty impressive.

We know the value of gold production remains the highest of Ontario minerals at \$3.4 billion in 2015, and that's the second highest in our gold production history. The value of platinum group metals production reached a record value of \$916 million in 2015, an increase from \$884 million in 2014—pretty impressive statistics and facts, and it's all about an extraordinarily hard-working industry that is focused on meeting that competitive need.

One of the great things here in Ontario is that Toronto remains the mine financing capital of the world. In 2015, the Toronto Stock Exchange and the TSX Venture Exchange raised \$6.8 billion in new mining equity capital. Together, they listed 1,300 mining companies in 2015. That's half of the world's listed mining companies, with a market capitalization of \$180 billion. Ontario mining company stock prices in general have increased in 2016. For example, the average stock price of companies with advanced mineral projects in Ontario increased by 85%, and that increases to 104% with companies with advanced gold projects. It's a very impressive part of the mining sector in the province.

In terms of exploration spending, we're extremely proud of the fact that Ontario remains one of the most attractive destinations for mineral exploration investment. Ontario led Canada in exploration spending last year, in 2015, at over \$393 million, while the value of assessment work in Ontario increased by 11%.

There's still so much more opportunity in the province of Ontario. There are over 70 million hectares of land that are available for staking in our province. Our rich geology is home to 42 operating underground and surface mines, yet there are 70 million hectares of land available. During the last decade, more mines have opened here in the province of Ontario.

We spoke at Meet the Miners; we had them here yesterday. My colleagues and my critics spoke about the fact that we need to promote the story of mining in Ontario more. I couldn't agree with them more. They said, "We need to tell our story," and part of that story is that during the last decade, more mines have opened here than in any other Canadian jurisdiction, with Goldcorp's Hollinger mine and St. Andrew Goldfields's Taylor mine both opening in 2015. New mines under construction are anticipated to come on stream over the next three years. There is mine construction under way on three projects as we speak. New Gold's Rainy River project: We're very excited about it in northwestern Ontario. It's in the Rainy River district. There's KGHM's Victoria project in

Sudbury and Goldcorp's Cochenour project in Red Lake. Plus, there are other projects that are absolutely moving forward—to the advanced exploration project.

There are more than 150 companies actively exploring 200 mineral projects throughout the province—projects ranging from the early exploration stage through to feasibility study.

And as development unfolds in the Ring of Fire area, that region will present tremendous multi-generational economic opportunities. As of December of last year, about 16 companies and individuals hold active mining claims in the Ring of Fire region. Noront's Eagle's Nest nickel project and future chromite potential in the Ring of Fire are going to be creating thousands of jobs in the future, many of them for indigenous people.

I'm getting to tell the story of mining in the province of Ontario, and it's a great one to tell. Ontario currently accounts for approximately 25% of Canada's mineral sector jobs.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you. It's incredible.

Mining is also the largest private sector employer of indigenous people in Canada. Isn't that something? The total number of direct jobs in mineral production in Ontario is just over 26,000 people, with about two thirds of those jobs being in the province's north. There are at least another 50,000 jobs related to the mineral manufacturing and processing industries in Ontario.

Many of these jobs are attributed to our colleges' and universities' graduate and post-graduate mining and earth sciences programs, which are globally recognized as some of the best. We must continue to encourage more exploration, because the world's need for minerals and metals will only continue to rise, fuelled by the demands of an expanding global economy.

We know that Ontario has the kind of mineral wealth essential to meet and exceed the demands of evolving new economies. The ongoing process that's under way in terms of modernizing the Mining Act provides the framework to encourage mineral exploration and mine development. I am confident that as we move forward, this framework will support and improve the way that early exploration activities are carried out.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to point out that the Mining Act modernization builds on the goals and the vision identified in Ontario's Mineral Development Strategy. These strategic endeavours affirm Ontario's commitment to attracting new mining and mineral development investment to the province. These efforts foster significant social and economic contributions to Ontario's economy and support the economic development of indigenous communities. The Mining Act modernization encourages the development of mineral resources in a way that respects aboriginal treaty rights, respects private landowners, minimizes environmental impact, and protects public health and safety. Our goal is to foster a mineral development sector that is efficiently and effectively regulated, that provides greater clarity, that increases predictability and that clarifies roles and

responsibilities for aboriginal consultation on mineral exploration and development activities.

Speaker, yesterday we were talking to a whole bunch of miners who came to Queen's Park. We had an extraordinary opportunity to spend some time with them, both at the reception last night—all parties in the House were there and spoke to them. Each and every one of them has got a very positive attitude about the mining sector in the province of Ontario. One of the keys to developing the mining sector is to modernize the Mining Act. It was a wonderful opportunity to simply spend time with them in a mining panel discussion we had as well.

There's no question that if there's anything I learned from my earliest days as minister—and it was an interesting lesson. I remember speaking with a long-time mining executive. He was a veteran of the mining scene. He said, "The mining sector is truly a cyclical industry. What you've got to do, Minister"—and that was in my early days, so I was a bit of a novice at this and just learning how to go about this. He said, "You never get too up, you never get too down, you just keep forging ahead. You keep forging ahead." That was a lesson that I was certainly very proud to learn.

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The bottom line is that we have a role to play in the province of Ontario. The province has a role to play, as do all the legislators in this House. We need to promote the mining sector. This is a huge part of our economy in the province of Ontario.

When I speak about the fact that mineral production is \$10.8 billion, that is such a significant dollar figure compared to what it was in 2003, when it was only \$5.3 billion. When I talk about the impact of exploration spending—that was hugely important as well. We are the number one jurisdiction in Canada for mineral exploration spending, and we are the number one jurisdiction in terms of mineral production.

What we have is an industry that is determined to move ahead with new projects and, may I say, with innovation. The key to the future of our mining industry is truly innovation: ventilation on demand, battery-powered vehicles. As we are forced to go deeper and deeper into the ground to keep our mines open, it requires us to be more creative and to use our research and development tools to find new ways to do things. That's exactly what we are doing in the mining sector.

We have the best and the brightest—and, may I say, we're also holding a mining innovation summit next week in Sudbury. I'd like to invite everyone who can be there in the Sudbury region. This is the research and development capital of Canada, and we're excited about that. This has been one of the priorities that we put forward with the mineral development strategy, that we would hold a mining innovation summit, so that people will understand even better how important innovation is to the future. There are solutions to be found. There are solutions that have been worked on. We are determined to make that work.

In conclusion, I do want to reiterate my optimism about the future of exploration and mining in our

province. The bottom line is that if passed, Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act, will build on the good work already being done to drive prosperity and foster the growth of Ontario's mineral sector. Ontario has tremendous growth potential, and our vision is clear: to be the global leader in sustainable mineral development.

Strengthening and modernizing the management of Ontario's mineral resources is part of our plan to create good jobs, grow the economy and help people in their everyday lives. Through Bill 39, we'll be supporting a healthy and competitive mineral sector to build a strong economy for today and tomorrow.

Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address the House, and I look forward to the results of further discussion.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: It's a pleasure to speak to the Aggregate Resources Act review. It's a very controversial issue in my community. Ahead of the 2011 election, the then member played into a lot of NIMBYism and perhaps torqued up the rhetoric on this issue.

But it did lead to an eventual ARA review that I was an active participant in. We toured the province back in 2012 and 2013, touring sites right across this province to see not only how aggregate is extracted, but we saw active rehabilitation happening. The committee put forward a thoughtful report back in 2013 with numerous recommendations; I know some of them are included within the bill, and I know that my colleague will get to that very shortly. Head to your microwaves, those sitting at home, and get some popcorn made, because my colleague is up for about 45 minutes. I know you'll want to be on the couch and not distracted.

We talked, within that report, about the need to have more and promote more recycled materials being utilized throughout the province on active construction sites. Municipalities will reject applications for virgin aggregate sites, but then not incorporate recycled materials within their specifications when they go through with their own construction. That was also mentioned by my colleague Sylvia Jones of Dufferin–Caledon through Bill 56.

Active rehabilitation: I know we visited a site in the member for Wellington–Halton Hills' riding, a Capital site where there was active rehabilitation happening throughout the entire process. I look forward to having more to say on this, but—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House today to comment on the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act and follow the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

I'm going to focus on the Mining Act, because I also learned when I was on that aggregate resources committee for a couple of sessions—we were looking at the

map where it covered, and the northern Ontario part was blank; it was white. I asked the question, "What does the white mean?" Nobody really knew. It turned out the Aggregate Resources Act doesn't cover most of northern Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Are you kidding?

Mr. John Vanthof: No, that's the truth.

But the modernization of the Mining Act—mining is incredibly important to Ontario as a whole, because mining finances a lot of the things we do in Ontario. We see it directly in my riding and directly across the north. I've got lots of mines in my riding: Kirkland Lake Gold, Alamos Gold. I've got several other ones—a couple of new ones—and lots of mining companies: Heath and Sherwood, and Boart Longyear. And there are lots of smaller exploration companies—one that comes to mind is Laframboise Drilling.

I listened very intently to the minister about the modernization, and I think there are a lot of good things there, but some of them deserve further scrutiny.

A while ago, I was at a meeting of the Northern Prospectors Association in Kirkland Lake, which was chaired by a fellow by the name of Gino Chitaroni, who has a long mining history—actually a little bit of political history, too. He ran against me once for the Northern Ontario Heritage Party, but other than that he's a good guy. He certainly knows a lot more about prospecting than I do, and he had a lot of questions about the modernization of the Mining Act, because a lot of prospecting and a lot of discoveries were made by those types of prospectors who got in the bush and knew what things looked like on the ground. He was afraid we were going to lose this. I think something that was worth repeating in this House and worth talking about.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to stand and give comment to the leadoff from our government on Bill 39.

Just as we frame this debate here in the House right now, I want to challenge all members in this House to think about the words they're using in this House, to not make the mistake the member from Kitchener–Conestoga made and start referring to aggregate that comes out of pits and quarries as "virgin" aggregate. This is 2016. That word does not exist in aggregate production anymore. It's known as primary aggregate, and I really challenge the member from Prince Edward–Hastings in his speech that he take note of that and not make the same mistake.

I'm very excited about this legislation, particularly because the number of times we've talked about recycled aggregate and the opportunities we have across Ontario, particularly in the GTA, when we break down roads, bridges and sidewalks and we have these big piles of broken concrete and asphalt all over the area, that we have to find a way to get them back into roadways. It has reflected a challenge over the last number of years. Members will know—maybe not—or will remember that I formed an organization a couple of years ago called Aggregate Recycling Ontario. This is an area of incred-

ible importance to me and to our government that we can use these resources more efficiently and we move forward in doing that.

I also want to comment on the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—what an incredible enthusiast, what an incredible champion he is for mining in this province. Should the occasion ever arise that I'm not standing in this House because I'm no longer the elected member from Beaches–East York, I think that's an industry—I want to get out there and tramp through the tundra, Speaker. I want to be out there staking my claims. I think this is an area where he has created incredible enthusiasm. I'm excited that that could be the next channel in my life, should we get there.

In the meantime, I'm quite happy to finish my two minutes here, knowing it's raining outside and the member for Prince Edward–Hastings probably has an umbrella for me.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to ask a few questions of the government with respect to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act, and I hope there will be responses by either the Minister of Natural Resources or the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. That's the process, and I hope they'll be here to respond, because, of course, that's the way we do this.

At the same time, I want to point out to the House that I wrote a letter to Minister of Natural Resources Donna Cansfield—I think it was in 2008, but her tenure as Minister of Natural Resources, I understand, was from October 30, 2007, right through to January 18, 2010. I thank the table staff for helping me get those exact dates. I wrote her a letter, and I suggested to her that it was time to look at the whole issue of pits and quarries, look at the standards upon which we approve gravel pit proposals and move forward with expanding that industry.

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As the member for Kitchener–Conestoga pointed out, in the 2011 general election, one of the members of the Legislature at the time, a government member, had an issue in her riding. The government wanted to be seen to be interested in the issue, and there was a commitment made that there would be a review of the Aggregate Resources Act. Again, that's something that I asked for in 2008.

I'm told that the committee did its work. It was around 2012 or 2013 that the report was finally tabled in this House. Here we are, three years later, Madam Speaker, and we're still talking about the recommendations of a standing committee of this Legislature. You would think that the months of work that were done by members from all three parties, coming together to work together to propose constructive solutions to the challenges—you'd think by now that those recommendations would be reflected in Bill 39. I understand that some of the recommendations have been included, but many have not. I would ask the government for an explanation as to why

some of those recommendations have not been included in Bill 39.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a shame that the ministers aren't here to respond to your questions, member from Wellington–Halton Hills—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No. Everybody knows the rules about attendance, so I need to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here for the debate this afternoon. It's an important piece of legislation—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, no. I've asked the member from Prince Edward–Hastings to withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

I recognize the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to be recognized. Thank you very much.

This has been a long time coming, as the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has explained. It's been many, many years. As a matter of fact, since I've been here, we've been talking about this, and I was a member of the general government committee. They say that no one likes to see the sausage get made. It's one of the oldest quotes there is in politics. In this case, the bill represents the end of at least a six-year process that started with the 2010 State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario Study, and it has progressed from there. But as we've just learned, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills had asked this even before that.

When I got here in 2011, my first committee assignment was as a member of the Standing Committee on General Government. Through the summer and spring of 2012, that committee conducted a review of the Aggregate Resources Act. As my friend from Kitchener–Conestoga alluded to, that study and review included a number of different site visits.

Before I do launch into my review of the proposed amendments and changes to how we operate pits and quarries in Ontario, I just wanted to recognize a couple of my colleagues for their exceptional work on that committee over that 16-month period or so.

My former seatmate, friend and colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga, as he has just said, did a considerable amount of work on this file because it is important in his riding. The townships around the city of Kitchener, in addition to having some of the best beer league ball diamonds outside the South Hastings Baseball League, are also home to a considerable number of pits and quarries that supply the tricity area and, I've heard, also act as pretty decent swimming holes, if you get a summer with enough rain. I know that's the same case in my riding. Those quarries can turn into nice places to beat the heat in the summertime.

I'd also like to thank the member for Dufferin–Caledon for her work on this file. I know that she has

spent a considerable amount of time here dealing with the issue surrounding the potential mega-quarry in the Melancthon township in her riding. She did a lot of work with the Standing Committee on General Government back in the day to get us to this point. I believe that she deserves to be commended for her work on that file as well.

This is one of the most contentious issues that we, as members of provincial Parliament, deal with regularly in our constituency office—at least, many of us do. It's also an issue that differentiates many of our urban members from the suburban and rural members across the province. You don't get a lot of aggregate quarries here in downtown Toronto or Ottawa, but you certainly need the aggregate here. If you live, though, in suburban Hamilton or suburban Waterloo region or rural Hastings and Simcoe counties, you do see them a lot, those pits and those quarries. Walk down a sidewalk, drive in a bike lane, take your car or public transit anywhere and you're using aggregate. If you live in a high-rise or a house, it's in there, too. You don't get cement bricks without sand or stone, as was mentioned by the Minister of Natural Resources when she spoke about an hour ago. Each of us literally couldn't live our modern lives without using tonnes of aggregate every year—and when I say tonnes, I mean tonnes of aggregate.

Every time a pit opens or a quarry expands, we inevitably get screams that this pit or quarry will bring about the end of the world, and you hear just about every reason why: The dust is so awful that it's going to block out the sun. It will destroy the watershed. The river will never run again if a pit or quarry is developed. The trucks are so bad that it will be like living on a 400-series highway.

By and large, these are well-meaning issues that are raised by people who are concerned about the ecological integrity of their little part of the world. In dozens of municipalities around the province, pits and quarries coexist peacefully side-by-side with farms and houses and all of the other fixtures of the landscape in that region. By and large, the quarry and pit operators are actually good neighbours. Depending on the size of the operation, they're also pretty good employers, especially in rural Ontario. But we hear about the problematic ones, as we do with anything.

So we have the Aggregate Resources Act to set out what is and isn't acceptable business practice in this sector. As with any massive and regulatory piece of government legislation, we have to update it regularly to keep pace with technological developments, environmental developments, planning developments and economic realities—and here we are today, discussing this new piece of legislation that was introduced back on October 6 by the minister. So that's what we're here to do.

As I've said, this has to be a long and gruelling process that has gone through four ministers, two Premiers and, I believe, two prorogations. Who knows how many staff were involved in this, but I imagine it would definitely be in the dozens, if not hundreds. But it's im-

portant, because it gets hard to deliver an infrastructure, again, if you can't take the rock out of the ground, and we know that the federal and provincial and a lot of municipal governments have a lot of infrastructure projects on their agendas. I know that the PC caucus is very interested in building infrastructure as well, because we desperately need it.

On average, this province consumes between 160 and 180 million tonnes of aggregate in a given year—160 to 180 million tonnes every year. A significant percentage of that—between 70% and 80%, depending on the year—is consumed by the public sector. That includes the province and municipalities. If you want to put a kilometre of subway line in the ground, you need 114,000 tonnes of aggregate for one kilometre of subway line. If you want to build a kilometre of two-lane highway, you need 18,000 tonnes of aggregate to do it. On the private sector side, it takes 250 tonnes of aggregate to build a 2,000-square-foot home. So you can see that we need the rock, we need the sand, we need the gravel. We have a lot of infrastructure replacements on the go right now and a lot of infrastructure projects in the queue at every level of government. As long as we build roads and bridges and subways and sidewalks and homes and churches and shopping malls and all of those great things, we're going to need aggregate.

It's also very good that that's the case. The sector accounts for over \$1.6 billion in GDP, over \$800 million in direct labour income and over 16,000 direct jobs. A lot of those jobs are in communities like Belleville and Tyendinaga and Bancroft in my riding. Simcoe county, which is represented by colleagues from York-Simcoe and Simcoe-Grey and Simcoe North, is also a huge producer of close-to-market aggregate for the GTA. Some of the biggest aggregate-producing municipalities are represented by members on the government benches like Hamilton, Milton, Ottawa and, of course, the Minister of Natural Resources, who hails from Cambridge, which is a hotbed for pits and quarries as well.

We have communities where we used to make things, communities where it was actually possible to be born, grow up, work, raise a family and retire in the same town. I'm not trying to get too nostalgic or anything here. There are people who would like us to think that it's the natural evolution of things that people are forced to move into larger and larger communities, that these little places that used to thrive aren't necessary to the future of the economy, but somebody still has to blast that rock, Madam Speaker. It's a good, honest job. In communities like some of those in my riding, it's one of the few reliable, good-paying jobs that are left. A quarry isn't going to mean to Bancroft what the mine meant. It can't employ that many people, but it can employ and it pays very well, in a part of the province where that's not taken for granted anymore.

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According to a Senate of Canada study, only 11% of students who live more than 80 kilometres from a university will attend one. That's a remarkable stat. Young men make up 43.6% of those who attend post-

secondary education, according to the Conference Board of Canada, and there exists a boy gap between young men and young women who attend university, meaning rates of young women attending post-secondary continue to rise faster than young men.

All of this is a roundabout way of simply saying a very simple thing: Having places like aggregate pits and quarries provides a place where low-skilled labour is still very much needed, and an honest day's work gets you an honest day's pay in communities where post-secondary education may be less likely for the residents and young people who live there.

When we spit out economic stats at you, what we tend to forget is the people behind those stats. What's important to remember in this debate, when we talk about the things we build with rock, gravel and sand, is the people who actually blast it, the people who have those jobs. To us, this may be an abstract. It may be a raw material that we talk about—speaking of the aggregate—in tonnes and where we measure complaints in dust and in decibels. But to thousands of Ontarians in communities from Manitoulin Island to Oliphant to Petersburg and Bancroft, the next rock and the next blast is the difference between a hard day's work and an unemployment cheque. It's very important. It's hard work, Speaker. There's no doubt about that.

We have to delve into the guts of this bill, Bill 39. That's why we're here. We do have a number of issues to address. There are things about the aggregate industry that cause opposition, and this legislation does seek to address some of them.

What we're here to examine today is how we're going to build going forward, what we're going to use to build it, and how the operations we rely on to help us build roads, bridges, schools, subways, houses, churches and hospitals will exist in the communities they will continue to be located in. Those issues, as I've listed above, are technical, environmental, social and even bureaucratic.

So how does the bill do at addressing those concerns? Well, let's first dispel the notion that anything I'm about to say will in any way be riveting or exciting. My colleague said to get the popcorn ready. I was joking with some of my grade 10 civics class students last week that if they are suffering from insomnia and they need something to fall asleep to, maybe record the one-hour leadoff on aggregates and quarries. It's interesting if you're interested in it, and it's vitally important, but it can put you to sleep.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very interested.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm glad the member from Thornhill is interested.

I know that these projects, in many cases, create local opposition. In my time as the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, I've had two projects in my riding that have run into opposition when they've applied to expand or even resume operations in the pits and quarries. In neither case was the operator a major aggregate company like a Lafarge or a St Marys. Both were just small, family-owned operations. Neither was running what

would be considered even an intermediate-sized operation by provincial standards.

So what's the cause for the resistance to these projects? At a bureaucratic level, it would be called social and environmental causes. At a local level, it can basically be broken down into water, dust, truck traffic and noise.

On the first score, the bill actually does strengthen protection around frequently raised concerns about the impact on source water. The minister is able to add conditions to existing sites to implement a source water protection plan under the Clean Water Act. I'm not crazy about the minister being able to do that without a tribunal hearing.

Decisions are supposed to be based on evidence, and that evidence is supposed to be heard openly and freely. Given that the minister's abilities here are so narrowly drawn and that this power only exists in the case of source water protection and that these powers aren't extended to potential areas of grievance, it's acceptable.

What we need to recognize is that the approvals process, assuming that all the studies and paperwork are approved and the relevant levels of government have signed off, is only supposed to take three years, max. Keep that in mind. That's really important: This whole process is only supposed to take three years, max. We've got applications in Ontario right now that have been in the works for eight, nine and 10 years. That's how long it's taking to get a pit or quarry approved. It should be happening in only three years.

It's critically important to get environmental protections right, but delays for their own sake aren't the point of having an open comments system. The bill addresses that, too, by requiring notification and participation in the public consultation process, including the name of participating individuals as well as their contact information at their own discretion, if they want it made public. So you have an absolute right to say your piece about any project in your backyard or in your neighbourhood or municipality, but if you're going to make accusations about environmental damage, you shouldn't have the right to do so anonymously. No quasi-judicial process can function that way.

In submissions made on the government's original proposal, A Blueprint for Change, which was posted to the EBR, there was considerable concern raised about the rehabilitation process. Submissions from the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy both addressed the difference between Ontario's current rehabilitation policies and the need to stress more progressive rehabilitation going forward. The submission by CELA raised the issue with the amount of the levy going to the Management of Abandoned Aggregate Properties Program that's operated by the Ontario Aggregate Resources Corp.

Currently, CELA's submission to the EBR states that the levy provided for rehabilitation of abandoned sites is only enough to rehab these sites over a span of 300 years. Increasing the levy provided to the abandoned aggregate

properties program from half a cent to three cents would increase that rate of rehabilitation from 300 years to 20 years, by CELA's estimation. It's important to get the rehabilitation part right.

At the start of this speech, I mentioned that there were abandoned sites in the riding of my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga that have made for good swimming holes over the years. Those are great stories, but it's not exactly safe and it's not ideal for how our aggregate sites should be rehabbed. Progressive rehabilitation is ideal and is far more possible for certain aggregate producers than it is for others.

That having been said, small operators, who often find the cost of progressive rehabilitation burdensome, do understand that rehabilitation is necessary. If we're going to have an industry, we have to make sure that we're taking care of the resource that we're using. That's particularly crucial when the resource is the land itself.

Good rehabilitation policy actually presents us with a climate change opportunity. After we use these aggregate sites, we can rehab them to a better state than they were in when aggregate extraction began. We have an opportunity on the carbon sequestration side, if we choose to. We can plant trees, and I know that's something that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has introduced in private member's bills in the past. We can plant trees, which is a great piece of infrastructure for removing carbon from our air. We can build wetlands on those sites as well. We can actually practise conservation and give our environment natural tools to deal with carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere.

As the bill does later when it deals with annual reporting and other issues, we have to make a distinction between large and small operators. Progressive rehabilitation is ideal in most circumstances and certainly when you're dealing with large producers who have vast resources to complete that rehabilitation. However, any rehab is a benefit long-term. It has to get done. In an ideal world, producers always do their own rehabilitation and we don't need MAAP long-term, but we're not there yet. Again, MAAP is the Management of Abandoned Aggregate Properties Program.

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When 2010's state of the aggregate resource study was done, an assessment of 50 sites revealed that 58%, or 29 of the 50 that were assessed, had begun some kind of progressive rehabilitation and were fulfilling the requirements of their site plan. Of the sites that had yet to begin progressive rehabilitation, the Ministry of Natural Resources' own report admits that the overwhelming majority were being run by small operators. Even the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy found that between 2002 and 2008, MNR had issued 100 rehabilitation orders and found that in the majority of cases, the producers were in compliance with the order.

As I've said, though, we can do better. Hopefully, we can get to a place where we're talking about all rehabilitation orders and not just a majority of them. We can come up with a rehabilitation strategy that helps small,

local producers achieve rehab rates comparable to their larger counterparts.

There were submissions to the government when their blueprint for the proposed legislation was posted to the EBR that requested more studies and information for things like noise, traffic and dust. Here's where we get into some parts of the legislation that need greater clarification, because there are a lot of fuzzy words and too much ministerial discretion in play in this bill, as it stands right now.

I should say that I am inclined to support the legislation at this stage and to recommend that this side of the House do so, but there are parts of the legislation that require a lot more clarity than what we're seeing in the bill. I'll get into some of that now. They're very vague in some ways in this legislation. My hope is that they're not intentionally vague, which is to say that it's not intentional that they're lacking detail, only to have the detail added later in a way that the government knows would have caused opposition, had it been included in the actual legislation. I think we all know the word we're talking about: It's "regulation" here.

The legislation sets out a requirement that proponents pay for peer-reviewed studies of technical details associated with the proposals. Of course, the definition of what constitutes "technical" isn't included in the legislation, so there needs to be some clarity about what they mean by "technical." This actually is a problem for those in the industry. It's a problem for us in the official opposition as well and it should be a problem for those in the community, too—not because the submission of peer-reviewed studies is unnecessary to the process; it can be valuable. If we're talking about the ecological impact of expanding and extraction at a site that has significant operations below the water table, then a hydrogeologist's second opinion is very valuable. But as with the minister's prerogative to require the addition of a source water plan without a hearing, the requirement for a proponent to pay for additional peer-reviewed studies on technical matters has to specify what constitutes a technical matter.

It's not enough just to leave it to regulation. I think maybe that's been the government's practice in the past: to leave a lot of the important nuts and bolts of legislation to be determined at the regulation stage. Members of the civil service over the course of my five years here provide exactly the same rationale for why things are done in regulation. It doesn't even matter what's in the bill anymore. The reason that certain matters are always left to regulation is supposedly because regulations are easier to change. Legislation is a process that takes too long.

Of course, the benefit of legislation is that it's really hard to change. That means that everyone knows the rules of the game when they step on the field. There's no playing for time, no working the umpire here. Everyone knows what they can and cannot get away with because the rules are there in legislation.

Not only proponents but also community groups who oppose projects deserve absolute clarity about when

additional peer-reviewed research can be required and when it can't. That way, there's no chance of it becoming a tool to drag a project out—and I think we're seeing that far too often, with projects that are currently delayed up to eight, nine and 10 years.

As I said earlier, the existing framework is intended to get you from application to approval in roughly three years, but it's not getting there. If all your environmental approvals are signed off, if your community notifications and consultations are done, if you've submitted and gained approval for site plans and a thousand and one other things—the process is designed to be onerous, and that's because we want to make sure that we have the right operators, in the right place, with the right project. But it's also supposed to be a fair process. It's supposed to apply a reasonable level of scrutiny on a reasonable timeline so that this province and its municipalities can complete infrastructure projects.

I'm going to be talking about the aggregates portion of this bill and my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka will be addressing the Mining Act portion of it, but we're seeing massive, massive delays. We just heard from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines talking about the Ring of Fire. There were questions in question period this week where we were asking the minister what has actually been done. There are no shovels in the ground. It's been in the budget now every year that I've been here, but nothing is happening.

That's what's happening with a lot of the pits and quarries in the province too: They're being dragged out. We have instances where, from the start of the application process to approval, we're looking at that three-year process max that is stretched into eight, nine and 10 years. That's simply unacceptable. It's unacceptable for the proponent of the project. It's unacceptable to the local residents, who maybe have an issue with the project, that it's dragging out over 10 years. And it's unacceptable for the needs of the province. As we've said, we need the aggregate. We need the close-to-market aggregate. So it's imperative that we get the work done as quickly as possible, and get it right, so we have the right projects, in the right locations, with close-to-market aggregate.

While I'm inclined to support the legislation, I believe we need to put in the legislation the specific circumstances under the new section 62.2 where the ministry can require peer-reviewed studies, because we need a clear distinction between requiring studies for the purposes of improving an application so that it provides greater protection for the community and the ecosystem and delaying an application for the purposes of forcing the opponent into an endless trail of expenses whose sole aim is to kill the project.

The amazing thing is who this benefits. The reality is that the odds of a community group beating a major international or national company are fairly small, because the pockets are just simply too deep with a lot of these big guys that are out there. I know what I'm talking about, Speaker, because I'm living it in Prince Edward–Hastings. I've watched a community group in my riding

in Prince Edward county go toe to toe with a major international energy company for the last five years. Fighting deep pockets is incredibly and unbelievably hard. The cost in time and in money and the stress is unbelievable. They're able to withstand long periods of litigation. It's not like these big companies don't have past experience in doing it; they do. So they know far better how to manipulate the system than these small guys in our communities.

It's actually the small local companies that get killed by the endless delays, and that's because they can't withstand the endless appeals, amendments and hearings. At some point, the project or the expansion doesn't or won't make enough money to overcome the increased cost of the process, so that's why the rules need to be fair and the rules need to be clear. It needs to be a fair process.

I once had someone tell me that if a regulation worked for a small business, it would work for a big business, but a regulation that worked for a big business wouldn't necessarily work for a small business. In the aggregate sector, we have a number of viable companies in both camps. We need regulations that work for both. That means the most transparent process possible, and the bill is lacking in transparency and definitions in certain parts of the legislation that we have being debated here today.

One of the issues that we're invariably going to have to deal with is the increase in the aggregate extraction levy. Right now, there are a lot of people who think that it's too low. As was previously mentioned, a frequent hotspot for local opposition to aggregate projects is truck traffic. It comes up less frequently than some of the other major concerns, but it's still frequent enough. The extraction levy is one of the ways that we can mitigate that concern. There's not a lot we can do at the present moment to make trucks quieter, but we can do something about the damage that heavy truck traffic does on municipal roads. At the moment, a considerable portion of the aggregate levy goes to the municipalities where the project is located to deal with infrastructure repairs caused by the truck traffic.

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There have been discussions about what the levy should be increased to and where those funds should go. There's a general agreement from both environmental stakeholders and industry stakeholders that the levy needs to be increased. Obviously, there are different priorities for what the increased levy should be spent on. Environmental stakeholders want it spent on rehabilitation efforts; the industry wants it handed over to municipalities so that they can put it into infrastructure.

It's true that between 70% and 80% of aggregates, depending on the year, produced in this province go into public sector projects paid for by the province or municipalities. There was a concern raised that any increase in the levy would increase the long-term cost of these projects. That's a legitimate concern. Not every municipality produces aggregate, and the increase in the levy would only return funds to those municipalities that do. If

the levy increase substantially increases the price per tonne, then it's a point that has to undergo some consideration.

However, there is a concern that any increase in the municipality could actually have an adverse effect in certain municipalities where the aggregate is being produced. And there's a concern that a levy that is too generous and that is remitted largely to the municipalities where the aggregate is produced will encourage the municipalities to expedite approvals for these projects because they want to get their hands on the cash. Given that we've established that the amount of time between application and approval is considerable, there is simply no way that revenue from the quarry or pit would be predictable enough to incentivize the kind of large-scale aggregate expansion that this concern envisions.

Now, the amount and formula for distribution of the aggregate has always been left to regulation. I'm not going to argue that that should change. That's an area where the ability to adjust the levy easily to reflect new realities makes sense. If we're going to make the necessary changes to how we conduct the business of aggregate extraction in this province, we're going to need to fund it. Everybody understands that.

We've addressed peer review, rehabilitation and increased protection of source water. There are more areas of this bill that need to be dealt with in detail. Like I said, this is a bill that is now on its fourth minister. The first time I heard that the government was finally coming in for a landing with this piece of legislation was under the last minister. But it also explains why the bill is so regulation-heavy, and this bill is extremely regulation-heavy.

The Minister of Economic Development likes to frequently talk about recent steps taken by the government to reduce the number of regulations at the provincial level. If he plans to cut a regulation for every new one that the government brings in, then he's going to have to take a paper shredder to the Ontario Gazette the day that we pass this bill, because there are a lot of regulations to be dealt with in this bill.

Not all regulations are bad. When you're dealing with excavation below the water table, rehabilitation standards, engineering standards and two different levels of government, it's important to make sure that you get that regulatory framework right. But the word "regulation" or "regulations" appears in the text of this bill 120 times. Fifty-nine of those times are in the 37 pages of the act that deal with the Aggregate Resources Act amendments. That doesn't include all of the items which are left to instances of ministerial discretion. I think I mentioned that earlier. That means that on a subject that generates a lot of community involvement, in a sector of the economy that is essential to the government's long-term infrastructure plan, there are a lot of things about the new amendments that aren't done in the most transparent manner possible.

What we do know is that transparent processes generally inspire trust, because people know what they're

getting into. When people understand how and why decisions are being made, they're more likely to accept the end result of those processes. That's why we need to be as transparent as possible. This bill isn't doing that because a lot of it is going to occur in regulation, away from this place, away from the democratic process in this Legislature.

Both in the blueprint that the government submitted to the EBR and in the final draft of the bill, the government proposed circumstances for reporting by operators that wasn't done annually. Currently, aggregate producers are required to submit annual reports. There is a consideration here that allows for certain circumstances under which reports won't be required annually, and those circumstances will be prescribed in regulation, so no one is really going to know.

When you have projects that can cause this kind of community protest, which we've seen in the past with aggregate pits and quarries—the type of community unrest that these projects have been known to create—setting high standards for compliance is a good thing. Setting high standards for compliance means that we're keeping good actors in the system and creating barriers to the entry of bad actors.

An annual report may be a nuisance for some pits and quarries that either haven't or have barely operated since their last report, but they serve an important purpose from an industry standpoint as well as from a ministry standpoint. They let the ministry know who is and isn't operating, in addition to any natural changes in conditions that have occurred at the site—or near the site, for that matter. They ensure the broader integrity of the industry that is necessary to establishing public trust around these projects.

For the foreseeable future, we're going to be using new aggregate in projects. That means that we're going to be digging pits and blasting rock. Because we're going to be doing those things, we need to ensure we have a ready supply of aggregate, and we need to ensure that we have a process that is as stringent and reasonable as possible. Annual reporting is a reasonable requirement.

I know in my experience with local opposition to quarry projects that anything that's missed, anything that isn't reported or where consultation hasn't met community expectations is grounds for continued opposition to a project. We'll never be able to end all opposition to all projects—we don't know what new projects we may be facing in the coming years.

The government has chosen, by not making significant amendments that would have altered sources of new aggregate, to maintain its close-to-market provincial policy. Because it has, that means that as we exhaust older sites while trying to keep up with demand, we're going to be pushing further and further afield.

There are certain project specifications, such as for the surface layer on a 400-series highway, that you can only get in certain rock deposits in the province. They may need to be shipped in from Manitoulin Island. Or if the

project requires stone from a limestone deposit, it might need to be shipped in from Tyendinaga or Napanee or Bath. That's something that's often lost in this debate: Not all rock is created equal. The Ministry of Transportation requires certain kinds of aggregate to be used in certain circumstances, such as for the surface layer on a road. In the private sector, certain kinds of aggregates are necessary for foundation work. That's because only certain kinds of work achieve the necessary rates of compression stability, and generally speaking, we prefer it when our buildings don't fall down.

Because we're going to need this product going forward, and because we're going to have to dig and blast to get to it, it's important that the process by which that occurs be as transparent as we can possibly make it, not only because it creates an environment of investor certainty for the people planning these projects, but also

because a clear and open understanding of the rules establishes faith in the process.

I know you're sitting on the edge of your seat, Madam Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to thank the member.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I adjourn the House, I want to thank the Clerk. It's her last day with us on a Thursday afternoon. Happy retirement. I'm sure all the members will really want to wish you a happy retirement.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 6 o'clock, I will adjourn the House until Monday, October 31 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	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, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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 Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité 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	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général 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 Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
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, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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 Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa–Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonnell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
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: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, 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
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
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 / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
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
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch