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Monday 1 December 2014

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2014

The House recessed from 1757 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 35, the official opposition had the floor, so I look to the New Democrats. I see the member from Timmins—James Bay and recognize him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, where I come from, when they say “G35,” people yell “Bingo!”

Mr. John Vanthof: Especially at this time of the evening.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Especially at this time of night: “Bingo!”

I want to deal with this bill, but I want to deal first of all with the fact that we’re sitting at night and the government has served us with a time-allocation motion in regard to G35. Here we are again.

I’m going to repeat what we’ve said earlier in debate, and that is that there are a number of bills that the government has on the order paper. A lot of those bills we probably would not be debating in this House for very long if we were able to actually do what the government said that they wanted to do at the beginning of the session, and that is, the government said that they were interested in moving some of their bills forward, and came to the opposition and said, to both the Tory House leader and myself, “How can we make things go through the House and make things work out generally?” We had

said that we need some time in committee in order to travel some of this stuff—not all of it. If we can do that, then we can probably come to an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that there used to be a time in this House that there was no such thing as time allocation. In those days, the government used to introduce bills. They used to sit down with the opposition. They would negotiate which bills went to committee and which ones stayed at second reading for any length of time etc. As a result, a lot of the bills that were before the House didn’t spend a long time in the House at second reading and spent hardly any time at third reading, because there was an agreement among the House leaders: “Here are the bills that we’re going to debate with a bit of meat on them”—those we would debate; those were the ones chosen by the opposition. Other ones like this went through the House with not a heck of a lot of debate.

The government has got this particular bill. Some of the stuff in this bill, they will argue, is non-controversial. I will argue that there are actually a couple of controversial parts in this bill. The government is essentially forcing the opposition to debate everything ad infinitum because they’re time-allocating absolutely every piece of legislation on the order paper which they want to be able to move through this House.

I will say to the members in this House, especially the newly elected members, that your House leader and your Premier—more importantly, your Premier—are not doing you any favours, first of all by bringing you here on Monday night at 6:30 to sit in the House in evening sittings, let alone to be in a situation where we’re debating all of these bills because the government refuses to make any kind of agreement on the passage of bills through this House as far as how long at second reading and how much time in committee. So we will have these debates.

To the bill: There are a couple of things that I want to say. What really troubles me in this bill is not so much that the government is trying to do this; it’s that they’re delegating their authority to do it all to cabinet.

If you look at this particular bill, it is essentially a bill that’s made up of three schedules. They repeal the Public Works Protection Act—fair enough; we all know that that’s about the incident we had here in Toronto some years ago in regard to what happened with the G7. Then there’s schedule 2, which amends the Police Services Act, again in relationship to that and to courts, and schedule 3, which deals with generating facilities.

In both schedule 2 and schedule 3, the government is saying the following: “The new section 142 confers on

the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to make regulations governing the exercise of the section 138 powers.” The problem with that is that for all of the stuff that we talk about here, rather than pointing out in legislation what it is that we want to do, we’re saying, “Generally this is what we want, and we’ll leave it to cabinet to make all of the decisions about what that should be.” That’s not a good idea, Mr. Speaker, because what this Legislature is doing is giving away its legislative authority on what it is the government is going to do on these two particular issues.

1850

A good example of that falls under the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. The government, in that bill, is saying that they are going to be able to make regulation as to the powers of search and as to which facilities fall under the auspices of this act, all by way of regulation. Generally, it’s understood that what they’re trying to protect is nuclear facilities—and rightfully so. I think there’s a good argument to be made that in nuclear facilities, we should have a fair degree of security when it comes to who enters and who exits those facilities, for common-sense security reasons. I think both sides of this House are prepared to have that discussion because that’s a fair question for the government to raise in this day of global terrorism and everything that we see going on in the world, and in the days of what we saw, unfortunately, in Ottawa two or three weeks ago, where an individual who was unhappy about something decided to run into the House of Commons with a gun and shoot at people and killed a person on the cenotaph. It tells us that these kinds of incidents are becoming more and more, unfortunately, the reality of our society.

I think it’s right for a government to say that we should be having some form of security at nuclear facilities so that the security forces there have a little bit more authority in being able to do their jobs about assessing what the risk is and trying to secure those facilities by controlling the people who are able to get into those nuclear facilities.

There’s a solar plant being built in my riding. There are solar plants all over this province being built—rightfully so; not a bad idea. But the government, by order in council, can decide to make a solar plant a place that’s protected under this legislation. Who here in this House believes for one second that there’s a risk for a person to walk in and visit a solar plant? First of all, they’re not secured, other than having a fence around them. Most people see these things on the highway or on the rural road as they’re driving through Ontario. Under this particular act, the government could—by way of the regulation it’s giving itself to cabinet; the delegated authority of this Legislature—say that a solar plant is subject to the security provisions of schedule 3 of this bill. Does anybody in this House believe that should be the case? I don’t think so. I bet you that if I were to put it to a vote right now, nobody in this House would say that a solar plant or a wind farm or a hydro generating facility should

be treated with the same type of security that a nuclear facility is.

If you read the act, the government is delegating the authority of this Legislature to allow cabinet to decide which type of facilities are protected with the provisions in this legislation when it comes to security: the power to search, the power to seize and the power to arrest. Really? We’re going to potentially have a cabinet deciding that, “We can do that at a solar plant; we can do that at a hydro facility; we can do that at a wind farm; we can do that at a non-utility generator, in the same way that we do at a nuclear plant”? That’s why delegation of authority is a bad idea. I don’t believe anybody in this House believes for one second that we should confer the same type of security measures on those types of facilities compared to what we have at nuclear plants. But that’s what the government is doing.

You’ll hear me get up in this House quite often and say that it is a bad idea for this Legislature to delegate their authority to cabinet when it comes to the making of regulations because, the minute you do that, it means to say that this Legislature has essentially dealt itself out of any decision about what should happen with its own legislation. I think this is a slippery slope of, essentially, having laws made at cabinet, where there’s really no public scrutiny, other than: Something is gazetted at the end of the process when the regulation is made.

I think that’s a problem, which brings me to the second point, which is: If we’re going to do that, which I argue we shouldn’t, there should be a more stringent process when it comes to the review of regulations. Currently, at regs and private bills, as we call it—regulations and private bills committee—a member has certain minimal rights to review regulation, but those rights are very limited.

You have got to remember, that standing order was written at a time when we didn’t delegate authority to cabinet. When I first came here in 1990 we didn’t automatically delegate to cabinet these types of powers. We would spell it out on the legislation, and it would say, “The minister shall,” and, “The minister will” do the following things.

My good friend the member from York Centre would know—he was here before me—that in fact we didn’t delegate our authority to cabinet the way that we do today. The reason we used to write legislation in the way of saying, “The minister shall,” or, “The minister will,” was because we wanted to ensure ourselves as a Legislature that the government of the day, whoever it might be—NDP, Conservative or Liberal—did what they were supposed to do as decided by the House by way of legislation. We very seldom delegated the entire guts of the bill to regulation.

At the time that the standing order was written around review of regulations at the regulation and private bills committee, it was a time when there wasn’t a lot of regulation being dealt with in the way that it is now.

Here we are, almost—well, I wouldn’t say “almost”; pretty well every piece of legislation that comes through

this House now, we're delegating the entire authority of the bill to cabinet to do what it wants. Once you've passed the bill, this Legislature has nothing to do unless it decides to pass a second bill to amend or to revoke it. But it's the government that controls the agenda of the House. Only the government can move a motion in the House. So it really makes this assembly quite powerless when it comes to being able to affect this once the decision is done.

I think we need to look, in this Legislature, as members, at extending the rights of members to review regulation. Here's what I would like to see. First of all, we know that all regulations are currently gazetted. That means that as soon as a regulation is approved by cabinet, before it goes into effect it has to go into the Ontario Gazette so that people are able to see it for a period. Depending on the legislation, it determines how long.

Why don't we have a situation where, in fact, if government is going to make regulation, the regulation should come back to committee in some way related to a bill? If the government passes this bill and they write the regulation—there should be some mechanism to bring the regulations from that bill back to the committee so that the committee can at least look at it and, at least at that point, there would be some public scrutiny as to what the government decided to do with its powers at the cabinet when it comes to making regulation.

The committee can pronounce and, at the end of the day, the government could ignore it, but at least the alarm bells would be sounded and those people who are stakeholders to the particular regulation would at least have an opportunity to shed light on what the government is doing so that we can hold the government to account.

Some would argue that that's a pretty extraordinary power for a committee, and I understand that argument. But the point is: If the government knows it's not going to get caught, it's going to do things. A good example of that is what happened with the gas plants, Ornge, eHealth and what's going on with MaRS etc. It's a question that governments do things because they think they're without impunity at one point.

In this day and age of technology and where we delegate all our authority from the Legislature to the cabinet, there needs to be some kind of mechanism by which members of this House and the public, more importantly, have an opportunity to be able to look at new regulation and pronounce itself as to: Does it make sense and is it a problem, or is it bad thing or a good thing? That would be one thing that you could do.

The other thing you can do—or both—is that you could extend the powers of the committee to be able to call particular regulations to the committee. Considering that almost everything is done by regulation and that there's far more regulation out there created by cabinet than there is legislation—as you well know, Mr. Speaker, there's like a printing press of regulations in the cabinet office that spews out regulations ad infinitum. But the point is that at least members of this House from both sides, government or opposition, should have the ability

to say, “Here's something that I've seen that's coming down the pike. This is a problem. I want to call that particular group of regulations before the committee to be able to review.”

If you do second reading, committee, third reading, the bill is done, they go off to regulation and there's some sort of vetting process that is automatic, then, at the very least you should give the members the ability to call that before a committee.

1900

Governments aren't going to like that; I understand that. The Liberal government is going to say, “Oh, this is a bad idea,” because the last thing they want is more transparency and accountability and openness in what government is doing. Oh yes, the Premier speaks a good line—she is open; she is transparent; she is different; she's a breath of fresh air. But as I close my eyes and I listen to what she's saying, she's using the same language as Dalton McGuinty. There's really no difference with this new Liberal administration and the older Liberal administration when it comes to their practices when it comes to transparency and accountability. You can say it all you want. You can try to say that it isn't so. But the test is what you do with your legislative agenda and what the government does when it comes to their actions when it comes to regulation.

Again, I say: The delegation of authority from this Legislature by way of regulation on a bill to cabinet in the way that we're doing it now is a bad idea, and it's certainly not transparent. If you read the bill—I'll just read you one section to give you an example. It says: “The new section 139 sets out offences and the new subsection 138(2) provides a power to arrest a person committing any of the offences, without warrant and using reasonable force if necessary.” It goes on to talk about the fines. All of it is delegated to cabinet as far as enactment and how it's going to work. If cabinet decides it wants to do something different than what we decided in this House, they've got a pretty good amount of latitude to be able to make that happen, and I think that's a really, really bad idea.

I want to speak about courts from the perspective of local communities. We have courts set up across this province for a good reason: so that people can have access to justice. Recently we learned that in the town of Hearst, the local judge, Judge Boucher out of Kapuskasing, decided that he was going to shut down court services in Hearst. For Judge Boucher, I guess that's great because he doesn't have to drive the hour and 10 minutes up to Hearst to do court whenever he does it. But for the rest of the OPP in Hearst, for the citizens of Constance Lake in Hearst, it's not a good thing, because it means to say that everybody has got to go meet with Judge Boucher down in Kapuskasing rather than doing court hearings in the town of Hearst. We just learned this by way of a letter from Judge Boucher about a week ago.

I just want to put this House on notice: This is a really bad idea. They're saying that the reason they've got to shut down the court—and the reason is not a bad one.

They're saying that it's because the court hearings are taking place at Place des Arts, where we now have a French public school that has classes there. Okay, fair enough; you don't want kids intermixed with what's going on at a court. Who knows what's going through that court on that particular day? So I think there are some logical arguments that the judge puts forward. But certainly to God the town of Hearst is big enough and has enough facilities that we can move the court to some other location in Hearst so that the people of Hearst could be served when it comes to court services in their community.

Je te dis que le maire, M. Sigouin, puis les conseillers de la municipalité, ne sont pas bien, bien contents. Ils se regardent, avec ces décisions-là, puis ils se disent : « Quoi? Nous autres à Hearst, on est de deuxième classe ou de troisième classe? » À la fin de la journée, c'est important que le monde dans nos communautés ait les services qui sont nécessaires. Puis je peux vous dire que le ministre et moi, on va avoir des discussions cette semaine faisant affaire avec cette décision. C'est quelque chose que je suis sûr qu'on peut contourner. Je suis sûr qu'on est capable de changer la direction, mais ça va prendre un peu de vouloir de la part de la province à dire : « On va prendre notre responsabilité envers les citoyens de Hearst et faire sûr qu'en effet, on a des services dans cette communauté qui sont nécessaires. »

I've only got a couple of minutes. The other thing I just want to touch on very, very quickly is the powers—it really bothers me. We're going to give security guards—in some cases, they may not even be properly trained—the ability to make judgment calls about, “Should I arrest somebody? Should I refuse them access? Should I search their person? Should I search their vehicle?” Those are pretty serious powers in a society such as ours.

We have a society in which we have certain rights and freedoms that we're accustomed to, and when we start drafting legislation such as this that confers the power of how this bill is going to work when it comes to search and seizure to cabinet, I would much, much rather that we be in a situation where, in fact, this Legislature spells out clearly who it is that can do this and in what conditions and what situations they're able to do these kinds of things.

We all agree: At a nuclear facility or a court, there has to have security. We get that. But to give blanket authority for people to make these kinds of decisions with—

Hon. David Zimmer: Blah, blah, blah.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There goes the “blah, blah, blah.” The guy who is a lawyer, the minister of Indian affairs, who probably would like to be the Attorney General, says, “Blah, blah, blah.” I would think that somebody in your profession would be a little bit more interested in those particular powers.

Mr. Mike Colle: More articulate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But he was very articulate in his “blah, blah, blah,” I must say.

I'd just say that that is a bit of a scary thought: that we delegate those kinds of authority to cabinet. For those people who don't get it, I think that's even sorrier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I'll remind members that the questions and comments should relate to the remarks that were just presented to the House by the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 35. I want to remind the member from Timmins–James Bay that the approved amendments before us have been brought forth by the standing committee. This is the third time this bill has been before this House and also gone through the committee.

Unlike the previous PWPA, the proposed act, if passed, would cover a limited list of infrastructure. I know the member from Timmins–James Bay has listed all the concerns about the infrastructure. The very key piece here is that the list of infrastructure is limited, and any additional critical infrastructure list would require an amendment to the statute, as opposed to regulation. I want to make sure that's clear.

The process of changing the statute is very transparent and open. There was some criticism from the members opposite saying that it has not been transparent and not been open. We are making this process more transparent, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to remind the members of the House that this is now the third time that this bill has been reintroduced to the House. The fact is that we have a dutiful responsibility to address the concerns raised by Mr. Justice McMurtry and others.

At the end of the day, I know everybody agrees in this House that we need to ensure the security for nuclear facilities, courthouses and critical infrastructure. We can debate this whole bill for the next two years, but I think that at the end of the day, we are here as elected officials to make sure that all infrastructure—especially the critical infrastructure—is protected at all times.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to start off by saying that the member from Timmins–James Bay, I think, brought up a very important point, and that is to delegate a lot of authority just to cabinet. We were elected to come here and set the rules and regulations, to define the rules and regulations, and ensure that we're bringing the feedback of all constituents that we represent. I'm a little concerned about the slippery slope we're going down of delegating all of that authority to cabinet.

We've seen what happens when that has happened in the past under this government and we don't get the full information provided to us. We've been trying, for many months—almost a couple of years now—at committee to try to get them to allow certain people to come and testify—Laura Miller and Peter Faist—and they denied that.

They're time-allocating a lot of things. Now they're giving even more power to just cabinet—not that cabinets don't have a role to play, but at the end of the day, I think we ought to be very cautious about giving that much power, that doesn't come in front of us as duly

elected legislators—and have the ability to represent the views of my constituents and what they've shared with me.

I think when I go more specifically to some of the pieces of the bill, the proposed changes would ensure court security guards have the powers to require all those entering a courthouse to show identification, provide a reason for being there, subject themselves to search, and, if deemed necessary, allow security officers to search the vehicle they arrived in, without a warrant.

Again, we have to do our best to ensure that the public is safe in our public facilities. I think this is very important. Having worked in a nuclear generating facility before, I think that it's very critical that you're monitoring who is coming in and out of a facility such as that and, at the end of the day, ensuring that the safety of the masses is protected, to the best of our ability.

I'm pleased to see that they've watered down a few of the elements from before. They gave too much power, I think, in the past to cabinet or the Premier to just appoint ad hoc groups. I don't think that has worked well for us. We need to ensure that this legislation will allow information to come in front of all of us so we can have proper debate, not time-allocated debate, and have proper due diligence given to it. That way, we'll make the best legislation possible for the people whom we're given the privilege to serve.

1910

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was quite interesting to listen to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay.

Basically, the bill has many parts to it. Some of the parts make sense, and we can see that it would be a step forward to have them come into place; some of the other parts of the bill, not so much. We will be confronted with this bill with many heads—a beast with many heads—some of them friendly and some of them not so much. The part that I find the hardest to support has to do with how much power we delegate to cabinet. We were elected. We are the leadership of our province—all 107 of us together. We represent the leadership of every part of Ontario. When we are together, we make decisions for this province, not delegate it to a few from the same party to change everything.

The other part of the bill that causes us grief has to do with court security. It is so important. The court system is a fundamental pillar of a duly elected democracy. When you add barriers for people to participate in the judicial process, those barriers go against the values that we have of a well-functioning democracy. To give power to a contracted-out security person who probably doesn't speak French or doesn't care about learning and then give him or her all of the powers to search and ask questions—I have problems with this, and a lot of the people I represent have problems with this.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened attentively to the member from Timmins–James Bay. He made some very good

points. I didn't agree with all of them, but I think he's trying to put some thoughts before us that are worth considering.

Just to know that this bill has gone through André Marin, the Ombudsman; it has gone through a special report by the Honourable Roy McMurtry; it has been before this House three times. It is about a complicated issue but an issue where we need to take some immediate action because there is a serious concern about security. If you want to see about the security of this province in our courts, you go up to the North York court—I think it's the busiest court in Canada—you can see what our judges, lawyers and police officers are faced with on a daily basis. It's kind of daunting to see what they go through.

In terms of my constituents in Toronto, what they are unable to understand is: How did they ever get this G20 here in Toronto? Nobody wanted it. I know that Toronto city council said, "We don't want them to come"; they were supposed to be in Muskoka, I think, originally. Then, all of a sudden, we ended up with an army of police officers; we had our city closed down for about a month. I know that a lot of shopkeepers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue because there was such fear and loathing around Toronto that people were afraid to shop. They never were compensated. The police officers were put between a rock and a hard place. At the beginning they said that the police weren't tough enough; then they said they were too tough. So everybody lost, and we spent a lot of money because the Ottawa government didn't listen to the people in Toronto who said that they didn't want the thing here in the first place. So here we are still trying to deal with this mess created by the government in Ottawa that never listens to anybody.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Timmins–James Bay for his reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I will continue to raise the issue of delegating authority to cabinet because I think it is a real problem. We have moved from one extreme to the other, and delegating the authority of this Legislature to the cabinet is a real, real problem. We are essentially dealing ourselves out, as a Legislature, about what the final outcome of a bill should look like. I used in this House, not too long ago, the example of the Conservatives when they were in power when it came to casinos. The NDP government had introduced casinos in the province of Ontario. Mr. Harris at the time, who was the third party leader, was opposed to that. So he promised that there would be no new casinos unless there was a referendum. To his credit, he brought legislation to the House and said, "There will be a referendum should there be a casino put in any community." Then he delegated all the gist of the bill to regulation. Guess what Mr. McGuinty did when he came to power? He eliminated the need to have a referendum in order to establish a casino in a community, which was completely opposite to what this Legislature had decided. We had decided in this House that if there was going to be a casino, there had to be a local

referendum. Because we delegated the authority of that act to cabinet, a future government, this time a Liberal government under Mr. McGuinty, decided to do completely the opposite to what this House pronounced itself on.

So why would we as the Legislature delegate our authority to cabinet on matters of public importance? I would much rather we have a bill that's drafted and says, "The minister shall," or, "The minister will." Then at least there's a clear understanding of what it is that we're doing with the legislation and there's not as much of a danger for governments in the future, without coming to this House, doing things that quite frankly are contrary to what this House decided.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING
ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA
SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When Bill 31 was last debated by this House, the official opposition had the floor. So I'll look to the New Democrats: Further debate? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to evening sittings, where I have the privilege of competing for airtime on the TV with Monday night football and a whole other bunch of entertaining shows that are on tonight.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Everybody is watching you.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I know. Everybody is watching me. You know what? Tonight, at the bingo hall, they would say that this would be "G-31." Between G35

we're almost close to a couple more bills tonight. You guys are good for a one-liner.

Good evening. It's actually the first time that I am sitting at evening meetings. It's always a pleasure to speak on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, first and foremost, but also as the critic for transportation for the NDP.

My colleague has left me some very valuable tools. I hope everybody can sit back and enjoy the entertaining discussions that we're going to have on An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act. That's a mouthful.

The Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act is better known as the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. I am going to talk about some of the positive attributes of Bill 31.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Mantha: There are some positives, but in every bill there is a poison pill, and there is a poison pill in this one.

There are, of course, flaws and causes for concern in the lines of this omnibus bill that I will share with you as well. Many stakeholders have shared their thoughts with me. I have constituents, and I would like to share these opinions and concerns with you today. So sit back; we have an hour. I invite you to make yourself comfortable. Settle in and fasten your seatbelt. Here we go. Enjoy the ride.

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"An act to make Ontario's roads safer" is a good name for this bill—another bill by this government with a really positive title, a good-natured title that doesn't shed light on some of the hidden agendas included in Bill 31. But let's put the brakes on the surprise element of this positively titled bill and talk first about some of the value added to Ontario roads by Bill 31.

The intent of this bill is positive in nature. Thanks to the hard work of my colleagues Jonah Schein and Cheri DiNovo, this bill addresses many long-standing concerns that our party has continued to raise regarding safety and cycling and automobile uses.

Bill 31 aims to improve road safety by addressing issues of impaired and distracted driving with a new segment addressing the impact of drugged driving in our communities. The bill includes provisions to enhance cyclist and pedestrian safety and provides more emphasis on enforcing the rules of the road. We would agree that these goals, if approached correctly, are what we all want for Ontarians.

Road user safety is my primary concern, and distracted driving is an issue at the forefront of keeping our roads safe. Driving requires your full attention at all times. Distracted driving takes you away from the primary task at hand. Distracted drivers are just as impaired as drunk drivers.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share a story with you. Travelling in from Algoma-Manitoulin, particularly from

Elliot Lake, I travel the road twice a week. I leave home on Sunday nights and drive back Thursday nights. Depending on how late we're going to be this Thursday, it might be Friday morning by the time I go back home. I can almost tell you for certain that when I come up behind a vehicle or even a transport, without even looking at that driver I can tell you if he's being distracted, either by using something inside of his cab—a person using their telephone. You can tell just by following these individuals because they're basically all over the road and you see that sudden movement of getting back in line or you see that telltale story, particularly at night, where there's a gleam or there's a glow inside of the vehicle. You see it happen very often.

It still astonishes me that people continue to do that. They read their articles. They'll watch a movie while they're driving down the street or just trying to get from one place to another.

How one can take the time to actually observe and concentrate and focus on what is in front of them—it's one second, and you're up on somebody's bumper; you're in somebody's ditch; there's an animal that has crossed the road; there's maybe a pedestrian walking on the side of the road. It's that easy, Mr. Speaker; it happens that fast.

I've travelled those roads many times. Just for instance, you sit down; you're driving; you're trying to concentrate, and all of a sudden, your phone rings. You're thinking about your phone ringing—"Who is calling?"—and you're trying to correct your driving. You're changing lanes, and you're thinking about your phone. Your phone is ringing: "Who is calling me?"

There's a transport you just turned over. The transport is coming in, but your phone is still ringing. All of a sudden, you decide to reach for your phone. You can't reach and grab your phone. Guess what? You are now taking your eyes off what you should be paying attention to in front of you, to look for your phone, and by the time your eyes get back up, it's too late. You've just caused a major accident.

That happens time and time again, Mr. Speaker, and we still see it happening. Every one of us in this room: We've seen it happen.

Do we bother to roll down our window and tell that individual who is driving beside us, "Hey, put it down"? Have you caught yourself sitting at a red light, looking at your BlackBerry? The red light goes green, and you know what? You hear that horn behind you. You're not paying attention. You give it that gas. How many times have you been caught?

It just got really quiet in here.

It happens that quickly. We all need to look at our own practices. We all need to look at what family members do. We all have it in ourselves to correct this type of action.

In our world, the scenario just described is so common. It happens all the time. In fact, it's so common that eight out of 10 drivers are distracted. Studies show that a distracted driver is a factor in eight out of 10—about four million—car crashes in North America each year.

Drivers talking on cellphones, in many cases, are just as impaired as drunk drivers, and experienced drivers are no better at handling the distraction of a cell than novice drivers. Alberta Transportation research shows that distracted drivers are three times more likely to be in a car crash than attentive drivers.

According to the CAA, drivers engaged specifically in text messaging on a cellular phone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a car crash, or a near crash event, compared with non-distracted drivers.

The RCMP's statistics show that in 2010, distracted driving was a contributing factor in 104 collision fatalities in British Columbia.

In Ontario, the OPP says that distracted driving has become the number one killer on Ontario roads. OPP statistics say that 78 people died in distracted-driving-related collisions in 2013, compared with 57 impaired-driving deaths and 44 speeding-related deaths.

Distracted driving is everywhere. It doesn't matter how many years of experience you have behind the wheel. We all are affected by distracted driving behaviours. This bill is a chance—Ontario's chance—to lead the way with progressive legislation and proper education to bring awareness to the safety issues and work towards safer roads in Ontario.

The bill includes stiffer penalties for distracted driving. It prohibits display screens and hand-held devices, specifically computers and TVs in cars. Who knew that all this time, I could have been writing speeches and catching up on episodes of *The Simpsons* while I drive up every week from Elliot Lake?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Simpsons?

Mr. Michael Mantha: No.

The legislated fines for distracted driving currently range from \$60 to \$500. With the proposed legislation, the fines will range from \$300 to \$1,000. If \$1,000 doesn't curb my urge to watch *Homer*, I don't know what will, Mr. Speaker. But it has been a long time that we've had this coming.

The increasing of fines is not being done with the goal to take more from Ontarians. We know collecting fines isn't going so well for the government right now anyway. We'll get to that in a couple of minutes. But increasing the fines for distracted driving will create a warning of serious repercussions to the wallet. Hopefully, this increase in penalties, and possible financial losses, will serve as a deterrent for Ontarians.

What I don't see in Bill 31, that I would like to see, is a section on including a distracted driving prohibition under the graduated licensing system. This means that when Ontarians first get their driver's licence, just like we have rules about not driving between certain hours with a G1 or about zero alcohol tolerance for drivers under the age of 21, we should also include in the graduated licensing system specific rules about distracted driving as part of our provincial campaign to really hammer home the dangers and repercussions of distracted driving.

By including regulations regarding distracted driving in the graduated licensing system, we have the oppor-

tunity to set up new drivers with good and safe habits from the beginning and in their driving careers. Including distracted driving in the graduated licensing system is an amendment to Bill 31 that I would really like to see.

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Moving on, I want to talk about a particular part. I'm glad that my friend the Minister of Transportation is here, because I took the time to speak to him this afternoon about this particular issue, and I'm just happy that he's here. I want to jump ahead in this particular bill: "Current section 191.8 of the Act authorizes municipalities to permit and regulate the operation of off-road vehicles with three or more wheels and low pressure bearing tires. The section is amended to remove the requirement that the vehicles have low pressure bearing tires.

"Current section 199.1 of the Act deals with vehicles classified as irreparable...."

Okay, it goes on.

I am more interested in that particular clause. My good friend here, the member for Parry Sound—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Mantha: — Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well as my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, along with my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and the minister—we are all on the same page in regard to hopefully what I understand this is actually going to accomplish. I was pleased to have the discussion with the minister this afternoon that this is basic housecleaning—cleaning up some legislation—that will permit, or eventually permit, the introduction of legislation that will permit the use of UTV vehicles on roads that are being utilized presently by ATV club enthusiasts.

I take this opportunity to read out a petition that we talked about on this. Just for the record, the petition reads:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

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

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

My understanding is that the particular change that is in this bill is housecleaning that will permit us to get to that next stage.

Let me try to give you the impact of these changes and what they mean to communities across Algoma–Manitoulin and, frankly, across northern Ontario, and how

they will benefit these communities. The tourism industry in northern Ontario is one that is fragile. There have been many reasons why it has become fragile. Irregular snowfalls—sorry, I shouldn't say that, but in the last couple of years we've had some regular, good snowfalls, which have actually increased the snowmobiling tourism activities that have gone out through our communities. But during the summertime, what has been challenging for some of these ATV clubs is that people have moved over from ATVs to UTVs.

There are interconnecting trails between many communities across my riding. You can basically leave Elliot Lake, get into Chapleau, do a loop in through Hornepayne, go up to Hearst, come through Manitouwadge, cut across and you'll be in Dubreuilville, and then back up in Wawa and work your way through the loop.

There are challenges to the ATV clubs. Let's not kid ourselves. There is still access to crown lands that some of these ATV clubs are finding very challenging because roads are being closed by the MNR. That's another issue we will deal with on another day. That is a very serious matter that is taking away road-based tourism from a lot of these communities.

But if you look at some of the opportunities that are there, these are individuals who, particularly when they travel as a group—you never have one or two. You're always looking at groups ranging anywhere between eight and 15, sometimes 20, machines. Some of the side-by-sides are four-seaters; some of them are two-seaters. So if you do the math, you're looking at about 40 to sometimes 60 individuals who are going to come to your community. They're coming to your community for quite a few reasons: (1) They're coming there for gas; (2) They're coming there in order to eat food; (3) They're coming there to spend the evening; and (4) They're coming there to buy whatever is in your community.

These are the economic engines that we have in small communities like Dubreuilville, Wawa, Chapleau, across the North Shore, Hornepayne, Manitouwadge—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Gogama.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —oh, and in my hometown of Gogama—that's right. Merci, France Gélinas. The member from Nickel Belt just reminded me.

These are the engines that we need in Foleyet and Timmins. This is what connects northern Ontario. These back roads are our playgrounds. This is where we work and we play. But it's also where we actually make our livings, which is why it is so important to see this amendment—and again, I want to give kudos to the minister. We did have a good discussion about this.

I'm expecting some follow-up from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who will continue to work with both myself and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka so that we can make sure we have these amendments and this change to regulation—I want to say it right—316/03, just to make sure that all the ATV clubs and all the ATV enthusiasts have the opportunity to expand their clubs, to expand their trail systems, and to really benefit from this. Really, it's a social activity. It has blossomed into a definite family opportunity for

spending some time and really enjoying what we have in northern Ontario, the beauties that we have, the lakes, the hills. It's an opportunity for all of us to really engage in an activity and spend good-quality time together.

I'm looking forward to seeing this housecleaning as a first step. It's a positive step in the right direction to getting it done.

Puis ça ne serait pas complet sans que je n'envoie un petit mot de coeur à mes collègues et puis au beau BigDan Vallieres de Dubreuilville, sans que je ne lui dise un petit mot : merci, BigDan, pour m'avoir envoyé le message sur Facebook l'autre jour. Je veux te laisser savoir que oui, notre parti, le NPD, avec mes collègues à travers du Parti conservateur et puis les libéraux, on va faire certain que les changements qui sont nécessaires pour que les gens qui ont les « ATVs » participent, se promènent, puissent partager, puissent se rendre au lac et puissent utiliser leur « UTV », pour faire certain que eux autres aussi ont les bénéfices, les chances économiques à développer dans les communautés, et puis que les gens, les clubs, puissent avoir les bénéfices d'utiliser les « trails ».

Comme j'ai dit, c'est tout le temps un plaisir que nous—quand on parle du nord de l'Ontario, nos chemins, nos bois, nos forêts, nos lacs, c'est là où on s'amuse. C'est là où on s'amuse, c'est là où on travaille.

Il y a beaucoup de problèmes qu'on a encore à adresser, même avec les amendements, parce que même si on fait les changements qui sont nécessaires ici, il faut encore qu'on regarde à l'accès aux chemins du bois. Ça, c'est un autre problème qu'on a présentement. Ce n'est pas ce qui est adressé à travers ce projet de loi-ci. On va essayer de l'adresser d'une différente façon à un autre temps à travers un autre projet de loi ou un autre changement de gouvernement, où les gens sont « restrictés », en effet, des accès aux lacs qu'on a en Ontario, où on a tout le temps été à la pêche ou on a tout le temps été prendre une marche dans le bois ou on a tout le temps été avec nos amis, soit en motoneige, soit sur le quatre-roues, soit avec le « UTV ». Ça, c'est un autre problème pour un autre jour.

Mais d'après ce que je comprends, ça me fait plaisir. J'ai eu la discussion avec le ministre cet après-midi, et ceci est une étape à nettoyer le projet ou la législation pour avoir la législation nécessaire pour qu'on puisse ouvrir et puis que les « UTVs » aient accès, comme les « ATVs » ont accès, aux chemins. Je voulais juste laisser savoir ça à mon beau BigDan. La prochaine fois que je monte à Dubreuilville on s'en rejasera.

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There are many good aspects of this—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, there are, and I'm not saying that sarcastically. There are some really good ones. But there is one particular one that I'd like to shed some light on, which is—if I can find it—where are you? Oh, there it is: the vehicle inspection centre system.

The act says that this will allow “the Minister of Transportation to make transition regulations to facilitate the implementation of the vehicle inspection centre system.”

Under new regulations, “the minister may establish a program for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection”—I need my glasses; that's pretty bad—“and may appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards to administer the program. The minister may”—again—“enter into agreements with service providers to assist in operating the program. The minister may”—again—“also enter into agreements to authorize persons to operate vehicle inspection centres and to authorize service providers to enter into such agreements.

“The director of vehicle inspection standards is given broad authority to issue directives governing certificates, inspection procedures and requirements and equipment and performance standards under section 100.7.”

My problem with that is my recent experience that I've been having along the North Shore, particularly in Algoma-Manitoulin. It's creating another agency, which is typical of what has been happening with the TSSA.

This afternoon, I heard my colleague talking in regard to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure on the creation of the college of training.

Again, you're looking at what was, at the time, back in the early 2000s, or in 1999 to 2001, when the Conservative government created this entity and the various powers that it has been granted. Only now are we seeing the impacts of those powers that have been granted to them, and the challenges that many of the small owner-operator businesses across my riding, particularly in the delivery of fuels, are feeling.

I have to say, it's not all negative. It has taken the last year and a half, almost two years, and I have to say that my staff, Grant Buck over in Elliot Lake, along with a fabulous lady who has been assisting my office, whose name is Cindy Vanier, have been assisting the various business owners across the North Shore, particularly on St. Joseph Island, in Desbarats and up to Chapleau. What we've been trying to do is work with compliance issues in order for these mom-and-pop operations to continue. Again, for the fragile state of our economy in northern Ontario it's important to have these gas stations open. It ties directly to what I was talking about earlier: the benefits of making that amendment for the ATVs and the UTVs in northern Ontario.

What's happening is, you're creating a body which will not be overseen, which will not be accountable to this government, and there will be transparency issues—and, by the looks of it, it will not be overseen by the Ombudsman. It will not be a crown agency, which will limit the oversight that this government will have. What that does is, it creates another blockage that businesses will actually suffer.

What has been happening is now—it was developed 10 years ago, but for whatever reason northern Ontario was left out of the loop. What's happening is that over the last two years, an overzealous agency has been plumping and inspecting and getting back to a lot of these business owners and issuing compliance orders. Nobody

doesn't want to comply; everybody wants to comply with the environment. There is not one business owner, whether it's from Sault Ste. Marie, across to Sudbury, all the way up to Wawa, Hornepayne, Manitowadge—they all want to comply.

However, northern Ontario is in a different situation. I'll explain to you why, Mr. Speaker. We do not have access to the volumes of sales that are generated in other areas. What we rely on is our tourism industry, when they do come in. What we rely on is those two or three months in the wintertime when there are family Ski-Doo activities that are happening that come through our community. What we do rely on is when those groups of ATVs and UTVs come through our communities. That's where we make our sales. But we also make our sales where—the community members rely on what we have in our community.

Creating this vehicle inspection centre will generate more problems for some of these agencies, because there is going to be a lack of accountability and oversight. When you don't have oversight, you're going to get into problems. Creating another bureaucracy and another level of non-transparency for some of the businesses across my particular riding of Algoma-Manitoulin is not something that we would like to see in this province at this point in time.

I look to the government and I hope—I see these words, as far as “may establish” and “the minister may enter into agreements.” I hope he looks at that seriously and looks at what has happened with the College of Trades, that he takes from that example and he speaks to the member from Sault Ste. Marie in regard to the discussions that we've had recently in regard to the TSSA.

I don't want to stand here and say it's all bad. We've corrected a lot of the problems that we were having with those businesses, and we're actually working on a plan where we're going to be moving forward, where some of those gas stations that had been closed, we're going to be looking at an action plan to reopen them, possibly, provided that they're in compliance, provided that there is no environmental impact and provided that they have all the safety mechanisms that they need in place. But we're going to develop it with a northern Ontario perspective, keeping in consideration the inspections and the compliance issues that are required, keeping in mind that with the resources that are available in northern Ontario, it's sometimes anywhere between six and 18 months that you're waiting for these services in order to just get cathodic testing for your pump lines. The available individuals who can do that testing are from southern Ontario, and most of the time there is a six- to 12- to 18-month waiting period. When you keep getting individuals to come back to that place, and telling them, “You didn't comply”—“Well, you knew I didn't comply. We just explained to you what the challenges were.” Getting another order and penalizing those owners repetitively, knowing that information is there and the challenges that they have, is not going to be good for them. I would certainly like the minister to follow up and have discussions

with the member from Sault Ste. Marie so that we all understand the challenges that are there when we do create these agencies that are at arm's length to the government and the challenges that are there in doing so.

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Bill 34 from the 40th Parliament is included in its entirety in Bill 31, and specifically discusses the collection of monies owed to the province in unpaid fines for parking infractions, photo radar system violations, red-light camera violations and speeding tickets. Currently, the province has over \$1 billion that stands to be collected in total across the province. This bill will include the amendments initially stipulated in Bill 34 to make changes to section 69 of the Provincial Offences Act. The changes allow the province to deny licence plate issuance or renewals to people with outstanding fines for traffic offences until they are paid. The bill will also support municipalities in their ability to enforce the collection of monies owed under the Provincial Offences Act. It will help make it easier for municipalities to collect millions of dollars owed by bad drivers across the province.

A lot of money has been pending for years, but there are also a lot of new infractions and tickets issued as cities continue to grow. Leeds-Grenville has lost somewhere in the range of \$6 million to \$7 million in revenue for uncollected Provincial Offences Act fines accumulated over the past 10 to 15 years; Sault Ste. Marie has lost up to \$12 million.

In 2001, the money that the province hadn't collected—when they downloaded fine collections to municipalities, they downloaded all of the arrears as well—all of the debt to the municipalities. When this was downloaded onto them, not only was the collection services downloaded onto them, the accrued debt that was there at that time was also passed on to the municipalities.

Licence plate denial has been undisputed as a very effective tool to compel payment of certain fines and obligations. It is currently used in very limited circumstances and is restricted to the enforcement of unpaid parking tickets, unpaid red-light camera fines, and Highway 407 ETR tolls, fees and interest. That's right: The private toll highway has the ability to deny licence plates by the municipality, but the municipalities are restricted.

The reasons for such an astronomical amount of fines to be unpaid by citizens and uncollected for traffic infractions are complex.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's pretty ridiculous, huh?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, it is.

They can be summarized as a lack of resources dedicated to fine collection and enforcement, coupled with the lack of effective collection tools to enforce court orders. Currently, the main issues around fine collection are the lack of coordination within the government and the need for operational changes to better align the authority of municipalities with their responsibilities.

On the first point, the lack of coordination within the government: the Ministry of the Attorney General is unconcerned with the matter of monies owed. Its primary interest is the administration of justice, but most Provin-

cial Offences Act penalties are, in fact, financial. The purpose of using financial penalties was to ensure the efficiency of the administrative and legal system. The Attorney General's system does not allow for cross-referencing with the Ministry of Transportation, which means that unpaid Provincial Offences Act fines cannot be easily tied to the Ministry of Transportation system. Reports stipulate that even in the case of Ontario drivers, ministries don't share information, which makes fine collection difficult.

On the second point, the need for operational changes: Municipalities need more tools—I think we were all lobbied by OGRA, I think it was last week, who were asking for more municipal tools to assist in collecting unpaid fines. The Ontario government needs to work with municipalities to make this collection possible.

This bill is a good first step in streamlining the process and giving municipalities more clarity. However, it will not resolve all issues relating to fine collection. North Bay has come up with a successful solution for their municipality by hiring a collections clerk who will consistently remind people of their overdue Provincial Offences Act fines. This is one way of getting the job done.

When the province offloads such a big task, with all of the arrears, the province also needs to ensure that the municipalities are properly supported to accomplish this task. Some 91% of the infractions come from Ontario drivers, but our systems are not connected to each other. Tell me, how does the province intend to rectify that?

The bill also includes provisions to deal with out-of-province drivers who have accumulated tickets in Ontario but have yet to pay them. The bill adds a section that outlines a process of issuing tickets to out-of-province drivers which would be similar to issuing tickets for regular Ontario drivers. Traffic enforcement would be provided the ability to properly ticket out-of-province drivers. What we need is a system that will also ensure that out-of-province drivers are held responsible for their infractions. We need to see a system of enforcement in Bill 31.

Let's go back to Highway 407. Let me give you an historical refresher.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Everything that's wrong, blame it on the Tories.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You were doing fine. You were being quiet. You were listening.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's just a delight being in here for night sittings. It's nice to see that everybody is so engaged in this discussion.

Highway 407: The toll highway opened in 1997. In 1999, in order to address an \$11-billion deficit, the PC government leased the highway for 99 years to a private operator in exchange for \$3.1—\$3.1 million or billion? I think that's billion. Yes, \$3.1 billion. In 2013, the 407 ETR reported revenues of \$801.2 million, and earnings, before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, of \$664.8 million.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A good deal if you can get it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

In 2012, as part of the budget bill, the government enacted the Highway 407 East Act to govern the eastern extension of the 407, which is currently under construction. The new public 407 east toll highway will be a P3, public-private partnership, operated and maintained for 30 years mostly by the same private companies that run the 407 ETR. Under the agreement between the government and the private operator of the 407 ETR, the registrar of motor vehicles is required to deny licence plate renewals after being notified by the 407 ETR that a driver has not paid their bill. The government has been very quick to afford a private corporation the necessary tools to enforce the collection of fines but has been very slow to provide municipalities with the necessary tools to enforce collection of fines.

The 407 ETR charges annual compounded interest rates of over 25%. The collection tactics of the 407 ETR operators have recently become more ruthless. They have fought controversial court battles seeking the right to collect 15-year-old invoices from drivers, including the legally bankrupt, while charging exorbitant compounded interest rates. In some cases, these drivers may have long since forgotten their invoice, assuming they even received it, and are shocked when their licence plate renewal is suddenly denied by the government for failure to pay an old toll bill that may have ballooned to 30 times the amount of the original invoice after interest is added on. The 407 ETR operators are fighting an Ontario Court of Appeal ruling from late December 2013 that says the 407 ETR cannot require the provincial government to deny plate renewals to those who have gone through bankruptcy proceedings. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal, and the case goes before the court likely in January 2015.

In November 2014, the Superior Court ruled that the statute of limitations for collecting an unpaid toll bill applies only after the registrar of motor vehicles has been notified. This allows the 407 ETR the option of delaying notification while interest charges pile up. Under legislation, the 407 ETR may notify the registrar after a bill has been unpaid for 90 days, but it is not obliged to.

In some cases, the toll charges are mistaken and were incurred by long-dead parents and ex-spouses. My colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has an elderly constituent who is facing astronomical charges from the 407 ETR bill because her son registered a car in her name. She doesn't even have a driver's licence. She is already struggling to make ends meet, and now she has the stress of a massive bill.

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The 407 ETR admits that it once practised bill suppression—stopping the sending of bills after three months—only to track down the driver years later with a whopping bill with piled-on compounded interest. They claim that the practice changed in 2010 after a series of scathing articles in the Toronto Star and that the 407 ETR sends out bills at least once a year to whatever address they may have, or not, on file. “We want to collect tolls, not interest,” said the ETR spokesperson. However, in

November 2010, the Star reported that, “Tales of woe are still arriving that make it clear the 407 continues to hold back bills and let the interest run up before sending out an invoice.”

When the Highway 407 East Act was enacted in 2012 as part of the budget bill, the NDP demanded amendments that required the registrar of motor vehicles to notify drivers via registered mail or bonded courier that their plate renewal was about to be denied. This was to guarantee proper notification in cases where the 407 invoice had gone to the wrong address and had somehow been diverted from the true plate owner. Bill 31 removes this notification requirement. This is a very serious concern.

During the same budget negotiations in 2012, the NDP supported a Tory amendment that would require public consultation in the case of a 407 east toll increase. Bill 31 removes the public consultation requirement. This is also very serious. The MTO claims this will be replaced with a regulation calling for automatic inflationary increases, but the legislation allows the ministry to set whatever rate it wishes via regulation.

I hope that these issues will be addressed before third reading and that appropriate amendments will be made to Bill 31 to ensure that 407 ETR users are properly notified of their bills and that the public is properly consulted as well.

Now, I am running out of time here, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to talk about the cycling industry because there is great news for cycling, but there are a few things that I didn't see in here.

Actually, with the minister being here—I want to thank Mr. Patrick Gauthier from Manitouwadge, who sent me these pictures of Highway 614 leading into Manitouwadge. I'd like to have a page or somebody so I can have these pictures delivered to the minister, because I think the minister would be interested in seeing these.

It is something that is very concerning in northern communities, which is the state of our roads, the maintenance of our roads and just the lack of proper equipment that we have across northern Ontario. I am looking at those roads in those pictures, Minister, and quite frankly, I will be going up to that area this weekend, and for the purpose of optics, I will be strapping on a pair of skates and I'll be skating down the middle of that road just to let you know that these are the conditions that we have in northern Ontario. That is from this afternoon, Minister, and I am really glad that you took the time to look at those pictures, because when Patrick called my office this morning, he was very concerned, not only for himself but for his community members. I think you can see the one truck—where there was the rollover of a transport truck in the ditch. You can see the problems; there has been such a big buildup of ice on the road. There are two paths that are open with tires but the problem is that there is a thickness of ice that, once you start hitting that with your tires, it throws you from one side of the road to the other. It's no wonder that—I wasn't there and I don't have the police report, but it's

pretty evident from those pictures how challenging it was for that driver to maintain control and stay on the road.

Again, Minister, I want to let you know that myself and colleagues from Timmins–James Bay, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Nickel Belt, Thunder Bay–Superior North and across are going to continue bringing you those pictures and the faces and the voices and challenges that we're having in northern Ontario, because we haven't fixed it all. There have been some improvements, but there definitely is a lot of work to be done across northern Ontario when it comes to road maintenance. It's going to be a challenge for all of us to make sure that we can get to and from our activities, to and from work, to and from our medical appointments that we so desperately need, and make sure that where we need salt and where we need sand and where we need plows, those are going to be made available for communities across northern Ontario. We won't accept anything less, Minister. You're going to be hearing that message very loud and clear from myself and my colleagues. I look forward to working with you on these issues.

We need to make sure that the inspections that are required to dispatch the plows that are required on those roads, and the preventive work—we see some of these signs that are lacking within our health care system. When we look at health care, if we would put more emphasis on preventive measures, to prevent illnesses from happening, we could save ourselves millions of dollars. The same thing applies to transportation. We can come with better practices to make sure that where the snow falls, it will melt on our roads. Where the ice builds up, there are ways that we're going to be able to dispatch the teams and the equipment that are required across northern Ontario to make sure those roads are clear.

I'm looking forward to working with you on this file and making sure that not only throughout northern Ontario but across this province we have proper, good, safe travelling roads so we can get to and from—whether it's getting to school or getting your daughter to those piano lessons or getting your son to that hockey game, just making sure we have the ability to get to and from our activities.

I want to circle back to the good things that we have been doing, particularly in my riding, when it comes to—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You're stereotyping.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: You're stereotyping.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just ignore them.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I like to have an engaging crowd. We're having good dialogue here, so we're doing fine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately—your remarks, of course, have to go through the Speaker. I would ask the government members to allow the member for Algoma–Manitoulin to make his speech without interruptions from heckling.

Mr. Michael Mantha: We're running out of time. You just took up some of my time, Mr. Speaker. These night sittings—we've got them on all week, right? And next week too?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: All right. That's perfect.

Let's move on to cycling and bicycle safety. At least one cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario, and thousands more are injured each month. This is why improving cycling safety in our province is crucial. Increasing cycling across Ontario benefits us all, for environmental reasons, health reasons, economic reasons and congestion reasons. However, safety concerns remain one of the largest factors that prevent more Ontarians from getting on their bikes.

While this bill before us says that its aim is to improve road safety and specifically to improve cyclist and pedestrian safety, this aspect of the bill falls very short. In the one-metre rule, this bill introduced an important condition that would require drivers to give at least one metre of space when overtaking a cyclist. Motorists overtaking is a leading cause of car-bike collisions, and a one-metre rule is necessary to keep the roads safe for all users. This is something that we support and something that my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, has pushed this government to adopt for many years now.

Nova Scotia actually passed a bill that did exactly this over four years ago. At that time, 15 states in the US also had a comparable rule in place. Jurisdictions internationally, including Germany, France and Spain, have all had a one-metre rule in place for years, and we are glad to see that this government has finally decided to think about the safety of our cyclists and motorists by considering this provision.

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It's unfortunate, however, that they didn't listen much sooner. Dozens of lives could have been saved had this government acted when we were pushing for these changes years ago. A closer look reveals that the effects of this bill don't actually require cars overtaking cyclists to provide a distance of one metre. Instead, it states that drivers must allow a distance of one metre "as may be practicable." That's a hard word for a French guy.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good effort.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you very much.

Enforcing this type of requirement, a one-metre distance for motorists overtaking a cyclist, is already very difficult to do in practice, which is why the condition includes, in this bill, "as may be practicable," making this requirement basically meaningless.

Another positive part of this bill was, unsurprisingly, first introduced by an NDP member. The provisions included in this bill that allow municipalities to create contraflow bike lanes, which help create safer and more direct routes for cyclists, was pushed by the former NDP MPP representing Davenport, Mr. Jonah Schein.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yeah, it was a great bill. It was. It's nice to see some of our ideas reflected in this bill. Sitting here as an opposition member with my colleagues from the NDP, it's nice to see that we actually are influencing change in the legislation of the day. It's

nice to see that we're actually accomplishing things, and it's also nice to see that our ideas are being used.

But at some point or another, you get tired of suggesting ideas. I'm looking forward to the day when I'm actually going to be sitting on the other side of the House. Instead of looking at the eagle telling you that you have to do your job and holding you vigilant, I will stand and look at the owl that's here and I will be wise in the decisions that I make and apply it to my everyday duties that I'm going to be having here at Queen's Park. That day will come.

Paved shoulders: I want to thank the group from Manitoulin Island, and also the member from Muskoka–Parry Sound—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Parry Sound–Muskoka, who introduced a private members' bill in our last sitting that required paved shoulders. I want to thank the group from Algoma–Manitoulin, particularly on Manitoulin Island, the MICA group. The cycling organization has lobbied the previous Minister of Transportation, and they were successful in getting some paved shoulders and roadways on Manitoulin Island. One of the biggest reasons why is that they were able to demonstrate how this would impact the communities, how it would connect, and how it was such a big economic engine for Manitoulin Island with the Chi-Cheemaun coming across from Tobermory into South Baymouth. We have hundreds, if not thousands, of cyclists that come onto Manitoulin Island now. Just in case you didn't know, Manitoulin Island is something that we should be talking about, not only as Ontarians, but throughout this country. Some of you might not know this, but did you know that Manitoulin Island is the world's largest freshwater island? Why is it that we don't have a strategy in this province promoting that in order to bring more people?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Why don't we have a provincial park on it?

Mr. Michael Mantha: We do. We actually have a couple of parks there. Come down to Misery Bay.

Interjection: Who named that, anyway?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm not sure, but it is such a gem.

Talking about paved shoulders and the work that my colleague did, it's something that we should be promoting. This is a gem that we have.

Also, just down from my riding I have a second island; it's called St. Joseph Island. The cycling group who are there are working in order to promote more of these healthy activities, which is cycling. I found out—I hope I give this justice—that there are such things as fat-bikes—I think that's what they're called. There are fatter tires on these bicycles, and they're actually now promoting more cycling during the winter months. The fatter tires give you better traction, and there are many trails and a lot of activity. So I was actually surprised when I sat down with them. I thought it was far-fetched, but there is a huge push and a lot of people are picking up this activity and this great sport. It's a healthy way of

spending a nice, warm winter afternoon across Algoma-Manitoulin.

So these strategies that we're looking at developing, not only on trails but also for the cycling world, who are able to use a lot of the roadways that exist there which connect these communities—and it goes back to what I was talking about earlier, the challenges that we have in making those changes that we need under the ATV/UTV regulation, making sure that our communities are connected so that the fragile economies in northern Ontario are interconnected so that the gas stations, the gift shops, the restaurants, the hotels and all other activities that are there—the local museums that are there—are actually benefiting from these great tourism activities through cycling, through ATVs, through Ski-Dooing. All of it is very much interconnected, and we need to make sure we have that ability in this bill of pushing these great activities going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very much running out of time and I'm not even close to finishing some of the comments that I wanted to make today. But as the new critic for transportation, I'm really pleased that the minister is here tonight during this late show. I want to let him know that my door is always open to him. I look forward to building a very healthy line of communication between both of our offices so that we can enhance, we can improve and we can benefit a lot more Ontarians in regards to how we're going to address the many challenges that we have. I know I've already started establishing that line of communication with him. I look forward to working with him.

I can't believe that an hour has flown by. I wish I would have another hour, because I have so much more to say. With that, on behalf of the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will bid you adieu.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member. There was a lot of applause here on this side of the House for that member's remarks. He spoke very eloquently for the better part of an hour here tonight. I found many things in his comments in the debate this evening very interesting to listen to, perhaps none more so than the geography lesson that he provided to some of our colleagues and the official opposition regarding the parks—in particular one, I understand, called Misery Bay. I think, Speaker, some days when I'm here in question period, I would recommend that many members of the official opposition would belong in a place known as Misery Bay.

But I also want to say to the member, who I understand from his remarks tonight is also the new transportation critic for that caucus, that I do look forward to working closely with him. He was very eloquent in his remarks tonight, and by and large supportive of the thrust of Bill 31, which is important because, of course, fundamentally, this is a bill that is designed to make sure that Ontario's roads remain amongst the safest in North America, as they have been consistently for the past 13 years or so.

Of course, understandably, the member had some questions and a desire to seek clarification around certain points. That's why it's important that after we move this bill through second reading—after plenty of debate, as there should be in this Legislature regarding something so important to the province—we get it to committee and can deal with it at committee. But I am encouraged to hear on this very important legislation, my very first bill as the Minister of Transportation, that the official transportation critic from the NDP caucus provided a lot of constructive feedback.

I look at my good friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, and of course one of my parliamentary assistants, the member from Cambridge, and I know that, with that kind of intervention from that member and from that caucus, we can work to make sure we achieve the outcomes we're looking for. When I think of the extraordinary work that my colleague the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell brought to bear with respect to some of the items that now appear in debate, I know that we're going to have a great time discussing this at committee, getting the bill passed, and making sure that our roads and highways remain very, very safe.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise and provide feedback for the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I was particularly interested in the fact that you highlighted the municipal engagement that is included in this bill. When John Oosterhof was the mayor of Grand Valley, he raised this issue with me a number of years ago. We tried to lobby the government, unsuccessfully at the time, to get them to assist municipalities in collecting unpaid fines, and ultimately it's great to see it incorporated into this government bill and potentially see it passed at some point in the near future.

In terms of my comments about provincial parks on Manitoulin Island, I must further clarify that there are, in fact, two provincial parks on Manitoulin Island, which, of course, the member would full well know. Oddly enough, the Liberals knew about the one in Misery Bay. The second, of course, is Strawberry Island. However, there are no provincial parks on Manitoulin Island that allow for camping. As an avid camper and someone who is always looking to enjoy the beautiful opportunities that are on Manitoulin, it is a great disappointment to me that there are no provincial parks that allow overnight camping.

So as a point of clarification, yes, in fact, there are two. I encourage all of the Liberals on the other side of the House to visit Misery Bay often when they want to—

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Outside of question period, and, of course, while they're on Manitoulin Island, Strawberry Island as well. However, please keep in mind that you will need overnight accommodation elsewhere because neither of them provide the opportunity for camping on

site. Thank you very much, and it was a pleasure to listen to the hour.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my comments to Making Ontario's Roads Safer after my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin did such a brilliant exposé of this bill.

One part of the bill I would like to really focus on is, if we are going to make Ontario roads safer: Why not take this opportunity to regulate utility vehicles, the UTVs? Right now, ATVs are already regulated in Ontario, and it has been a success.

As Mr. Mantha said, it brings tourists to a lot of little communities in my riding. Nickel Belt has fantastic trails for ATVs. More and more you see UTVs, which, in my point of view, are safer. You sit side by side; they come with crash bars; they are a safer vehicle, but they are not regulated. So why not take this opportunity, while this bill is open, to make sure that we go a step further and regulate the UTVs so that they too are allowed to cross a road, they too are allowed to participate in those kilometres and kilometres of trails that you will find all over Nickel Belt. Whether you go from Shining Tree to Westree to Sultan to Gogama, Foleyet, Ivanhoe Lake—all of them have ATV trails. In and around Sudbury in my riding, as well, from Walden to the valley to Rayside-Balfour, to Falconbridge, they have fantastic trails.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, Chelmsford also; it's part of Rayside-Balfour. But we don't have the regulations to be allowed to use them. Now is an opportunity. This bill is open. Let's do the right thing and regulate that.

I thank Michael, who is also my driver.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. He really did fill up that hour, and far more eloquently and it was far more entertaining than Monday Night Football. It is a Jets and Dolphins game tonight, though. I'll phrase it that way.

The other thing I wanted to mention, and I wanted a chance to say it while he was speaking, is that if he really wants a good shot of the owl, a good view, we've got some space. I'll help him carry his desk over. The only catch is that you'll have to hang out with us on Wednesday afternoons. I am not sure that he wants to do that.

But seriously, this bill is about public safety. I think if you listened to the remarks of the member from Algoma–Manitoulin and everybody else who spoke in the House, there are ideas from all over the House. If you take a look at the member from Scarborough–Rouge River—he introduced last year the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, which was an act about distracted driving and increasing the penalties, adding demerit points and increasing the fines. That was something that led out of a tragedy in his community. Those are the kinds of things that we don't want to see.

In terms of cycling, the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Burlington and the member from

Parry Sound–Muskoka all put forward good, solid ideas about how we can promote and make cycling safer in our province.

I'd like to congratulate the minister on this bill. I think it's an important piece of legislation that will increase public safety. I am encouraged by the supportive remarks of members from all sides of the House. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Algoma–Manitoulin for his reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, folks, that's all. I just wanted to reiterate: We did have a very healthy discussion in regard to the positives of this bill, but there are some negatives. We will certainly be looking at discussions about that going forward. You don't have my full support yet, and I want to be clear about that. We do have a lot of work to do with this, particularly with these vehicle inspection centre systems and the actual arm's-length organization of them and not having any oversight by this government. I have a big problem with that, with the experience that I've had recently in dealing with some matters. I think I articulated that quite well in my comments.

I want to thank the Minister of Transportation once again for being here tonight and listening to the debate.

My friend from Dufferin–Caledon, there are many camping places on Manitoulin Island. There are wonderful places. And you know what? They charge a very minimal fee for you to go in and enjoy it. Being here, working this overtime, I'm sure you have a couple of extra bucks that you can actually put in and maybe enjoy one of their gift shops that they have there.

Speaking about that, you all are invited to go down to Misery Bay. They have some fascinating trails out there, and some great activities, and also in Strawberry.

To the member from Nickel Belt, absolument, France, il faut qu'on travaille et qu'on continue à travailler et à garder la pression sur le gouvernement pour faire sûr que l'application et les changements à la législation sur les « ATVs » et les « UTVs » se fasse. Toi et moi, on connaît les bénévoles qui pourraient venir au Nord, dans nos communautés.

To the member for Ottawa South, I thank you very much for your comments. They were very well received. I am not going to go down that trail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I am pleased to recognize the member for Brampton–Springdale for her maiden speech in the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to address this House and my fellow colleagues for my inaugural speech. I am proud to be elected the member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of Brampton–Springdale, and of course I'm proud to be a part of team Wynne. I think we have a Premier who works hard for Ontarians and is committed to a balanced approach to best serve Ontarians. I am very proud to be a part of this team.

Speaker, my riding is located in the heart of Brampton, which includes neighbourhoods like Snelgrove and the villages of Heart Lake, Springdale, Sandringham, Madoc and Bramalea Woods.

I am preceded by the honourable Linda Jeffrey, who is now the mayor of Brampton. I want to thank Linda for all of her hard work as an honourable minister and the member for Brampton–Springdale. I also want to congratulate her, as today the city of Brampton did have their inaugural meeting and she is officially now the mayor of Brampton, or Her Worship.

I have taken the opportunity to offer my personal congratulations to all those who recently ran for public office in Brampton's municipal elections. As an MPP, I understand the hard work and dedication that goes into running for public office. More importantly, I recognize that these candidates put in hard work and are motivated by a desire to make a positive change in our community. I am looking forward to working with all of my local, provincial and federal counterparts to support the city of Brampton and to support the issues that matter to us as a province.

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More than 500,000 of us, people from all parts of the world and from every faith and culture, now call Brampton home, and that number is continuing to grow. Brampton is my home and has been my home for the last 18 years. I first moved to Brampton in 1996 with my family and have watched the community of Springdale develop around me. I have seen the Brampton Civic Hospital develop, local businesses flourish and families grow. New families and new settling families chose Brampton to make their home. Brampton is where I grew up. Whether it be shopping at Bramalea City Centre, skating at Gage Park or going to the Chinguacousy Wellness Centre, every corner of Brampton holds a special memory for me.

Before coming to Queen's Park, I am proud to say that I represented wards 9 and 10 in the city of Brampton as a school board trustee in the public board for the Peel District School Board. As a school board trustee, I saw first-hand some of the advantages of the investments the Liberal government has made in education over the last 10 to 12 years. I saw the great things we've done for our children and the foundation that we have set through programs like full-day kindergarten.

I truly did enjoy my time at the school board. The three and a half years that I spent at the school board were very, very special to me. It gave me an opportunity to learn and to grow as an individual. At this time, I want to thank all of my colleagues at the school board for their support. Walking into the school board, I was the youngest trustee there, and they welcomed me with open arms. They taught me everything I needed to know and they supported me. I want to thank the senior administration team at Peel, as well as all of my fellow trustees, especially somebody very special, Beryl Ford, who retired after 45 years of service to the Peel District School Board this year. She was a mentor for me and her way and her connection to the community was so special that only

Beryl could go about doing things the way she did. Now, I hope that I will have the same support from this House, coming in as the youngest member of provincial Parliament to Queen's Park.

My time at the school board taught me about the importance of grassroots politics. It also taught me about staying connected to your community. The school board taught you that you had a BlackBerry and a laptop and you had your community. So it was just you and them, and that is something that I can move forward with as an MPP because it has given me the ability to respond to the requests of my constituents, to work with my constituents and to really understand what's important to them.

Nothing is more important to people than their children and what happens in their children's lives. The school board, I think, was the perfect foundation for me to grow in my career, and I will always cherish the memories we had at the Peel District School Board and the experiences that I took away from there.

I would also like to mention a few other very special people. First, I want to talk about my parents, who have supported me throughout my whole political career, which I started four years ago. They have always been there. They've been my backbone and they've been the structure. They've given me the ability to move forward. Coming from a background and a culture into politics, they are more than supportive. They are the ones who have encouraged me and stood by me.

I also want to, again, acknowledge my colleagues at the board and the rest of my family—my cousins, my friends, who have been there for me through thick and thin, who have put up with my craziness, who have listened to me, all of them, and campaigned and knocked on doors and put tireless efforts into my campaign. They were all absolutely wonderful. Without them, I could not be here today. Without their encouragement, their support and their love, I could definitely not be here today. They made this campaign one of the best experiences possible. We worked together. We worked as a team. I always say that you are only as good as the community, the volunteers and the team that stands behind you. So thank you very much to my whole team. You guys are phenomenal. I've grown up around this team and they've supported me right through and through, from taking that first step as a school board trustee to taking the next step to run as the Liberal candidate from Brampton–Springdale.

We knocked on doors, we stood at GO stations in the morning, met with our commuters, visited seniors' clubs, sporting organizations and small businesses in our neighbourhood. From all of them, all I understood was that when they heard what we had to say, they believed in the Liberal plan, they believed in us. That's why Brampton–Springdale remains a Liberal riding.

My family has a special story. I come from a family of immigrants. My parents immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s. They built a home for themselves in Ontario. They worked hard, and they often tell their stories about working tirelessly to give my brother and I a better life

than they were used to. My father grew up without both his parents, so it was especially important for him to provide his kids with more and to give them the compassion, the relationship piece, that he didn't have. He had lost his parents at a very, very early age, and that's why he continued to support all of us.

Sorry; I'm going to go back. There's somebody else I want to thank in this House. It's the member for Mississauga–Erindale, for his support and his encouragement through the nomination process and through the election process. He has been a strong mentor and friend to me over the last few years, so I also wanted to acknowledge the member from Mississauga–Erindale.

My family came to this country in the early 1970s, and my parents worked hard to build this life for themselves. They worked two to three jobs. My dad says he did a little bit of everything; he had a licence in just about everything. As an immigrant family, that's what you do until you find your niche, until you find what's right for you.

What sparked my interest in politics was where my dad found his career. My father's commitment to community service and democracy sparked my interest in and love for the public service. His commitment to his constituents reminds me every day that leadership is about service, that politicians are there to serve the public.

This is how I got involved in politics at an early age. The exposure to politics was very important to me, as my dad was the first turbaned Sikh member of Parliament outside of India, elected in 1993 to the federal House of Commons. My early campaign experiences with him started at 12 years old when he ran his first nomination, and those experiences were priceless. I was taught to knock on doors at a very early age and say, "Hi. I'm here on behalf of..." From there, I went on to run his campaigns, to manage the campaigns, to build a strong volunteer base, to fundraise and do all sorts of things. Eventually, it came to a point where I decided that this was something that I wanted to do. I wanted to serve the public. I wanted to follow in his footsteps. That's what I'm going to do. My dad believed in an open-door policy. This is something else that I will continue to promote in my riding of Brampton–Springdale.

I now want to talk about our government's agenda and the speech from the throne. We're moving forward with our four-point economic plan to grow the economy and to create jobs.

First, we are investing in people's skills and talents. By investing in our people's skills and talents, we will prepare them for the economy of today and tomorrow.

In challenging economic times such as these, I fully believe that the role of government is to provide families with the opportunity to realize their full potential and to ensure their access to vital public services. I am pleased that our Liberal government's progress to date includes completing the rollout of full-day kindergarten, investing in child care modernization, and launching Experience Ontario, a nine-month paid community work and service program that allows high school graduates to gain

valuable work experience before they enrol in post-secondary education or choose their career path. Again, as a school board trustee, I see the value in this program because a lot of our youth don't know what direction they want to take. Because they can take advantage of programs like this, they're able to make better decisions for their future.

We are also extending the Ontario youth strategy, giving more young people the chance to gain a foothold in the job market, and developing a comprehensive labour market information strategy to help job seekers, students and their families make informed decisions about their education, training and careers. A renewed results-driven poverty reduction strategy aims to reduce the child poverty rate by 25%.

Speaker, the second priority is building modern infrastructure and transportation networks. This is one of the top issues that I hear about when I meet with my constituents. That's why I'm proud that our government is making nearly \$29 billion in dedicated funding available over the next 10 years for public transit, highways and other priority infrastructure projects across the province. It is investing \$2.5 billion in provincial highway and bridge projects this year alone. Through the government's Moving Ontario Forward plan, we are allocating up to \$15 billion right here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We are going to invest \$11 billion over the next 10 years for elementary and secondary education infrastructure, and we will invest over \$11.4 billion in hospital capital grants over the next 10 years.

The third priority that I'm proud to be working with my colleagues on is to create a supportive and dynamic business climate. This is critical for a growing city like Brampton. By supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate, we will help small and medium-sized businesses grow and attract larger companies to invest and create skilled jobs in Ontario. Our industries are well positioned to take advantage of new opportunities. That's why we are investing \$2.5 billion in the Jobs and Prosperity Fund over the next 10 years, and introducing the Better Business Climate Act, which will ensure regulatory burdens are reduced and smarter regulatory practices are being adopted.

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We are continuing to pursue opportunities to unlock economic value from provincial assets such as General Motors shares, real estate properties and ongoing reviews of LCBO, OPG and Hydro One, led by the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets.

We are also developing our Going Global Trade Strategy, which is exemplified by the Premier's recent trade mission to China, which attracted nearly \$1 billion in new investments and will create more than 1,800 jobs in the province of Ontario.

We can also look at Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, which will create 30,000 jobs and has already helped 2,400 young people gain the benefit of on-the-job workplace experience. It's introducing them to employers and offering them a head start on their future careers. All

of these initiatives will help our businesses thrive and compete in an increasingly global network of private enterprise.

The fourth priority is to strengthen retirement income security for all Ontarians. By strengthening retirement income security for all Ontarians, we are ensuring that Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years and helping Ontarians retire with dignity.

To be clear, Ontario's preferred solution remains an enhancement to the CPP. However, the cost of inaction is too high. That is why our government is taking the lead on introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, that will offer Ontarians a secure benefit for life. Ontario is committed to introducing pooled registered pension plans, PRPPs, which will offer employees and the self-employed a voluntary, low-cost, tax-assisted option to increase retirement savings.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is an investment in a secure retirement future. Study after study tells us that the current system for saving is not meeting the needs of the majority of Ontarians. Without action today, we face growing economic uncertainty in the future that threatens our economy and our business. The Premier is absolutely right: After years of contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve a secure retirement. We have an economic imperative to act now. We are taking leadership and introducing a made-in-Ontario solution with the ORPP.

These actions, taken together, will grow the economy, protect revenue and create jobs, all of which are very important priorities for my constituents in Brampton-Springdale.

I also wish to specifically mention recent accomplishments in my riding. First, our government has made tremendous investments in transit, such as the Highway 410 extension. The government is continuing to improve the highway by widening it and adding HOV lanes from the 401 to Queen Street. We have invested roughly \$95 million in Züm, which is our rapid transit bus service in Brampton. We've invested millions of dollars in gas tax funding, which provides stable, predictable, long-term funding for both the city of Brampton and the region of Peel. Our government is working hard to transform the GO Transit network, which thousands of our residents use every day for both business and personal purposes.

I'm proud of our government's funding of the Brampton Civic Hospital and the redevelopment of the Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness, which I actually just last week had an opportunity to visit for an information session. We will be able to provide the relief that Brampton Civic needs with these services available.

Speaker, I'm particularly proud that our government has uploaded vital social services that the residents of Peel depend on. It means we're ensuring that Brampton and the region of Peel receive their fair share of funding. We are not downloading services, like the previous PC government.

In particular, the uploading of court security costs and the funding of children's mental health services have

been tremendously beneficial for my community, as has the insurance fraud reduction act and the stronger workplaces act. These are priorities that, again, we heard about at the door, and we are committed to continuing to work on them.

I also want to acknowledge how excited I am to be the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues. It has been an absolute honour and privilege to work with Minister MacCharles and our Liberal caucus, which has so many wonderful and talented women.

As a parliamentary assistant for women's issues, I will be engaged in outreach to diverse cultural communities to ensure that the work of the Ontario Women's Directorate reflects the diversity of the women in Ontario. I will also be working to support our government's efforts to end gender-based violence, with the goal of an Ontario where women are free from threat, fear or experience of violence. This will include working with women's groups, service providers, community leaders and other experts across Ontario, involving them in our government's efforts to change the attitudes that perpetuate gender violence and to improve supports to victims.

Speaker, I will also make it my mission to raise awareness about women's equality issues and to support the efforts of women's organizations and other partners to achieve gender equality in Ontario.

This is another issue that is very near and dear to my heart, as we've had a victim of domestic violence in our family. My cousin lost her daughter at the young age of 22 in North Carolina when her husband brutally murdered her.

Therefore, I think that we need to champion these issues. We need to build awareness. We need to work with women. We need to empower them so that they can come out and share their experiences and share their stories. It's so very important that everybody knows that they have the support that they need so that they can have a better life. I will continue to raise that awareness in my community and in communities across the province in working with Minister MacCharles.

Speaker, in closing, my constituents have entrusted me to work hard and to fight on their behalf for what's important to them, and I will do my very best. I am proud of our Premier and I am proud of our government's agenda to build Ontario up. I look forward to working with all members in this House to do the best that we can do for the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is an honour to respond with questions and comments to the member from Brampton-Springdale. I didn't actually know you were the youngest member of the Legislature, but, trust me, we age people very quickly here, so that will change. Congratulations.

As a Peel MPP myself, I'm sure there are a number of issues that we will be able to work together on. I'm sure there are one or two that we will not, but that's okay too.

Peel is somewhat unique. We have some very fast-growing communities. You would know this, of course,

as the member made reference to her time on the Peel school board. So she has probably a very good appreciation of those challenges, both on the social side in terms of developmental services for children in the school system, and I know—I hope I know—that she will fight hard for her residents in Peel. I am sure that we can work together on those issues.

In terms of your work as a parliamentary assistant, I am pleased to hear that you are working with Minister MacCharles. There are, obviously, some opportunities on that file, particularly in light of some pretty disturbing public things that have been happening and have been publicized in the last month. I hope that we can work together to bring that issue to the forefront and cast some light on it, so to speak.

Welcome to Brampton–Springdale. I look forward to working with you. All the best in your tenure here.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand and welcome to the Legislature the newest and youngest member, from Brampton–Springdale. It was her inaugural address. I believe she did an excellent job of telling us who she is and where she's from.

She forgot one thing, though, Speaker, and that is the six degrees of separation we have in Windsor, because she has strong Windsor roots and connections.

In fact, as you know, I was elected in a by-election, and she told me she was in Windsor for the by-election. I knew she wasn't working for me, so I said, "What were you doing there?" She said, "Oh, I was working for my cousin. He was running against you." And I said, "I am so sorry I beat him." She said, "No, no. It was okay. It was a good fight." I said, "Yes, but I got 61% of the vote." She said, "No, no. He might run again, so you be careful." She has put me on notice that that might happen.

She was a school board trustee. My wife is a school board trustee, and has been for about 20 years. I'm just following in her footsteps.

You owe her a call, by the way.

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Ms. Catherine Fife: I know, I know.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: All right.

Although I'm not the oldest member in the House, I'm the oldest in my caucus. When I volunteered, for my friend from Algoma–Manitoulin, to run over to the Minister of Transportation to bring his photographs he had taken by a constituent today, I was having fun with the member from Ottawa South and others, who said, "You're the oldest page this Legislature has ever had." It doesn't matter. You want to do a good turn; you want to help somebody out, and there's always somebody who's going to let you know about it.

Seriously, to the member from Brampton–Springdale, you're doing a great job. I would have preferred to see a New Democrat in the riding, but you're there. We have four years together. You did an excellent job in your inaugural address.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm so proud to rise to commend my colleague the member from Brampton–Springdale for her maiden speech. It was very passionate and very personal in terms of what you've shared with this Legislature. I see the strong values from your family that have really forged you in terms of your work here in the Ontario Legislature. I think that those deep roots will serve you very well.

I know that you have the support of your community. I have attended the Rose Theatre in Brampton, where, at the United Achievers event, I saw you in action. The connection that you have with such a broad group of stakeholders in your community—there's a lot of respect there. I think that you can build on that in your work in the community.

I was really touched by your immigrant story. It's a story, of course, that I share as well. I came here in the 1970s with my family. I think that that immigrant story is a part of Ontario. It's part of our diversity. It's part of what makes us one Ontario and a strong community.

I'm also really very pleased that you are the voice that is standing with Minister MacCharles on behalf of women in this Legislature and the role that you play for all women in Ontario in terms of your work in the women's directorate. I know you've taken on extra duties as the deputy chair of our women's caucus.

I see that there's a burning passion there that it is connected to. The tragedy and the loss that your family experienced in terms of losing your relative to intimate partner violence: I would say that that, too, is part of those roots that will help to drive you forward.

My advice to you would be to continue to use that strong voice as you represent the people of Brampton–Springdale. I know that your tenure here will be long and successful. Congratulations on your maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to stand and welcome the member from Brampton–Springdale. I did not know that you were the youngest—certainly maybe the newest, but not the youngest. Welcome. You are very mature for your age, young lady. It's a pleasure to serve here with you.

I like maiden speeches because what we get to see and hear is a little bit more about the personal side of each of the members. I believe all 107 of us come here with the exact same interest, and that is to serve the people who gave us the privilege and pleasure to be here. We may have different ideas on how to get to certain places; we might even voice them occasionally in this House. But at the end of the day, I think we're truly here to serve, and I believe you're doing a good job of that.

It's also good to have my good friend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, Percy, who I would suggest is the oldest and wisest page we've probably had in this House. If you have a connection to him—I'm almost wondering if you probably didn't vote for Percy down there. It's a secret ballot, so I'm not going to put you on the spot for that. But how could you not vote for a guy like him?

You truly, I believe, have made your family proud. You are a role model for the immigrant population. You're a role model for women. You're a role model for young people. You're a role model to show anyone that if you put your heart and soul into it, you can be an achiever and you can do amazing things, even at a young age.

I think all of us—certainly I'll speak for me and my three years: It's a learning curve. There's lots of new stuff coming at us every day. It's a world that no one else can truly appreciate. I'm not even certain that our spouses and our families can truly appreciate the heart, soul and determination we have to put in every day just to do our job.

I credit you for doing that. I credit you for stepping up. I look forward to working with you in the future. I really wish you the best of success.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Brampton–Springdale for her reply.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, everybody, for your kind words. I want to thank the member from Caledon and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—if I could have voted, maybe I would have considered it, but I couldn't vote there; I was just visiting—and, of course, the honourable minister from Scarborough–Guildwood and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Thank you all for your welcoming remarks and for welcoming me with open arms. It's almost like going back home to Peel for a few minutes there, with all this love I'm feeling in the room right now.

I look forward, again, to working for my constituents. As I said earlier, leadership is about service. It's very important to me that I do a good job serving the constituents of Brampton–Springdale. I know that they have high hopes and high aspirations for me as an individual and for me as their representative. I will try my very best to bring their issues, to advocate for them, to bring their voices to the table and to make sure that what they're telling me is being heard here at the Legislature.

You sometimes may have different opinions, but I think that once you're elected, you become the voice of your community. It's very important that we remember we are not our own voice as much as we are their voice. We represent their interests. I will continue to try to represent those interests.

I come from a very diverse community, with different groups, different interests, and I have a full understanding that not everybody will be happy all of the time, but it's our job to try to make sure that a majority of the people are happy a majority of the time, and I will do that.

Thank you again for welcoming me with open arms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: I sat here all day, waiting for this. I came back just to hear this.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I can feel the love already, Mr. Speaker. Great.

Mr. Bill Walker: Look at how many on the other side came back just to hear you speak.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they're all smiling too. I'll try to make this brief. As King Edward said to one of his many wives, I shan't keep you long. That's an old one.

It's an honour to rise today and add my thoughts on Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014.

My office had the opportunity to review the minister's comments from his second reading debate on November 27, 2014. I believe that for the most part, the minister had fair reasoning for many of the items included and inserted in Bill 31. He noted in his comments that “on average, one person is killed on our roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes.” Those are very alarming numbers. They speak to the fact that despite all the warnings and all the technology that has gone into making our roads and automobiles safer, more still needs to be done.

Overall, I support this bill, as our caucus does. There are some changes that we would like to see made through amendments, and there are some ongoing issues affecting road safety, especially in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. As we are all here to represent our own ridings as well as the province as a whole, I would like to see the minister address those in his first piece of legislation. I'm optimistic that this minister will listen to the concerns that I know he is hearing from MPPs from all sides of the House and all three parties.

First, I would like to speak briefly about some specific aspects of the bill that I support and I know would find support from my constituents in Sarnia–Lambton.

Distracted driving: For myself, I've heard a number of members speak about distracted driving. Travelling the 403 and the 401 to get here two or three times a week, I see it as well.

I can't believe, with the fines that are in place, how many people I still see, either in Sarnia, Petrolia or on the way here to Toronto, on their cellphones while they're driving and making turns. You would think the message has gotten through; obviously, it hasn't. If we have to do it through increased fines and enforcement, I support that 100%. I've got family that are in law enforcement, and they're supportive as well of this type of legislation.

There seems to be almost no time when you aren't accessible or being updated with information, and this includes while driving. There's no doubt in my mind that the use of hand-held devices, like smart phones, while driving is a huge distraction for drivers.

Later, I'm going to mention one of our former colleagues—I know he pushed this for a long time—John O'Toole, who was a long-time member for Durham.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's sadly missed.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We miss him sadly here.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm trying to keep his petitions going.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound continues to mention his name every day when he introduces a petition.

In the time it takes for a driver to complete the simple task of reading a text or a tweet, a vehicle travelling at normal speed on our busy highways can travel hundreds of metres. While this driver is reading that text, not only are their eyes not on the road, but their mind isn't on the task of driving. They're not processing any of that important data that it takes to drive a car in this high-technology era.

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As a province, we've had laws on the books prohibiting the use of hand-held devices since 2009. As I said, Mr. O'Toole, the former member from Durham, was a great promoter of that.

I know that somewhere in these remarks, it talks about it, but I was listening on the radio the other day. I think it was the CBC or Fox News; I don't know now. Anyway, they talked about an app that an individual in the United States has developed—and I don't know how it works, because I don't understand that technology—that will actually shut the cellphones and text machines so you can't receive while the vehicle is moving. I don't know how it works, but I know that if they can put a guy on the moon and put people around the world in these space-craft, they can come up with an app that would disengage those telephones and those devices we have in our cars.

I know I have something in my car to do with—well, I can't upgrade the GPS while it's moving. You can't enter it. If we can do that with those types of devices that we have in our vehicles, I know we could do the same thing with cellphones. I would encourage the industry, before you have to do it through legislation, to do the right thing, get on board and let's make these things disabled.

Wouldn't it be nice to have an hour or two, while you drive to Queen's Park or somewhere in the province, where you weren't inundated with messages? If it's that important, pull over every once in a while and check it.

I was on the US highways just recently on a trip down south, and I noticed that they're starting to put places on the Interstate where you can pull off, check your email and make some phone calls. I think there are even charging stations there. I don't know; I didn't check one. Let's look at doing those kinds of things here in Ontario as well, and do everything we can to encourage people to leave these things alone.

I'm hopeful that Bill 31, through the increase of penalties for using hand-held devices while behind the wheel, to a maximum of \$1,000, will send that strong message to the driving public that this is a violation that the province takes very seriously.

To give you an idea of how this issue resonates with the constituents of my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, I'd like to read an email from one of my constituents, Mr. Rich McFadden, who lives in Port Lambton, Ontario, on the subject of distracted driving.

Mr. McFadden writes: "Hey, just heard on the radio that distracted driving is ranked the highest killer on the

roads today. Travelled the 402 in the last month and twice was almost run off the road by people texting. One was a young girl driving a van that swerved over to our lane, and the other was a trucker. I realize they are going to increase fines and possible lose demerit points (good but not far enough).

"My suggestion is to electronically block cellphone connections if the vehicle is running. A person would have to be so many feet from a vehicle to unblock a connection. This is an easy fix with electronic blocking. The cops can't be everywhere with all the people that have these devices.

"Just a thought."

Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that drivers in the province will take that personal responsibility to stop using hand-held devices while driving, but if they don't, it may be time for the Ministry of Transportation and others to take a look at the sort of prohibitive measures that Mr. McFadden is suggesting. That's something that I was talking about, that app that I know is available. I heard it talked about on the news media one day.

That brings me to my next point on Bill 31, and that's impaired driving. We must all agree that those impaired, whether from alcohol or drugs, should not be driving, period. The sad reality is that people continue to take this risk, despite the potential impacts and penalties.

The MTO has implemented some very serious consequences for those convicted of impaired driving. I'm sure that each member's constituency office hears regularly from constituents who are going through the ministry's Back on Track program or who are required to have an ignition interlock device installed in their car. The stories that these drivers often tell speak to the serious impact that having your licence taken away has on someone's lifestyle.

But driving in Ontario is not a right; it's a privilege. The sooner people stop taking risks with not only their own safety but with the safety of other drivers on the road, the better things will be in Ontario for all of us.

That being said, I am supportive of the measures in Bill 31 that will make it tougher on people who get behind the wheel while impaired, through either alcohol or drugs, including licence suspension or car impoundment for non-compliance with the ignition interlock program.

I would also like to briefly talk about the section of Bill 31 that will widen the scope of professionals who will report drivers to the MTO who they think could pose a risk to safety. I deal with a number of these individuals from time to time in my riding who have been disqualified and then it's very difficult to get their licence back.

Right now, doctors and optometrists have a duty to report to the MTO when one of their patients presents with symptoms or an ailment that they feel could negatively affect their ability to drive. This often leads to the patient receiving a surprise letter in the mail indicating that their licence has been suspended.

If the driver disagrees with this assessment or believes that an error has been made, it can take months—literally

months—to have a review of the decision completed by the MTO. This means that during that time, fully competent drivers can have their lives turned upside down, affecting their work careers or their ability to take care of themselves or their loved ones through running errands. For seniors, losing their licence can mean that they certainly lose their independence.

Before any change is made to expand the list of professionals that can send off reports to the MTO that may result in a licence suspension, the ministry and all of us need to have a long discussion with the drivers in this province who will be affected at some time. Taking away someone's driver's licence can have a dramatic impact on their livelihood. I'm concerned about that power being extended to professionals who may not have the full review of someone's medical history the same way that their doctor would.

Rather than increasing the scope of the medical review system, I would like to first see the MTO address the lengthy delays that drivers face when trying to have their medical suspension reviewed. No doubt, as the population continues to age in Ontario, this issue of medical suspensions will continue to grow. As the senior population grows—I'm moving closer to that myself every day—it is important that the MTO take the time now to make sure it has a system in place to deal with the growing number of suspensions and reviews.

There are a number of other points to Bill 31 that on the surface appear to address issues that would seem to make Ontario's roads safer. Considering that Bill 31 was given the short title of Making Ontario's Roads Safer, all the different facets of Bill 31, like distracted driving, bicycle safety and pedestrian safety, certainly give the Liberal government many different points to play up in the media releases and tweets.

I was, however, disappointed that within Bill 31 I did not find any mention of the need for the MTO to take greater steps to monitor and adequately maintain road conditions in Ontario. I know that many members of this Legislature have made requests to the ministry about how roads are maintained during winter months, and that's not just in southwestern Ontario but certainly in northern Ontario. Our northern colleagues have raised this issue many times in this House.

The Ministry of Transportation hosted a conference call earlier this year to speak to members and their offices about how to assess and respond to road conditions. Despite the concerns raised by members on the call about the road conditions in their ridings, the message that I heard from the MTO was that, in their opinion, everything was fine. I think many members in this Legislature who represent those areas found outside of the GTA would agree with me in saying that everything is not fine. The MTO, while doing a great job, could be doing much more.

For the purpose of this discussion on Bill 31, I'd like to highlight a persistent concern in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, and that's the maintenance and road conditions of Highway 402. I'd like to read into the record a letter

from the mayor of the town of Plympton-Wyoming, Mr. Lonny Napper. This letter was addressed to the Ministry of Transportation earlier this year and it's about the conditions of provincial roads in Sarnia-Lambton. Mr. Napper writes:

"I would like to bring to your attention the conditions of Highway 402 from mile marker 15 to 40. I and my fellow council members are very concerned for the safety of those driving through our municipality, as this stretch of road is not being maintained in a proper and timely manner. Highway 402 is a class 1 road and needs to be salted and brined prior to anticipated snowfalls. The material on this stretch of road is concrete and freezes more quickly than the rest of the stretch of road, which is constructed with asphalt.

"While it is understood that there may be vehicular accidents during storms, this stretch of Highway 402 has seen an increase in the number and severity of incidents. The most recent incident occurred on Tuesday, March 25, 2014. This incident was a multi-vehicle accident which included at least eight transport trucks, multiple vehicles and three fire trucks. Five Plympton-Wyoming firefighters"—volunteers, I might add—"were injured in this accident.

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"From September 2013 to December 31, 2013, the Wyoming Fire Department was called to 14 motor-vehicle-collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402 between mile markers 15 and 40. What is more, from January 2014 to March 25, 2014, the Wyoming Fire Department was called out to 21 motor vehicle collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402 between mile markers 15 and 40.

"Therefore, just this winter season alone, the" same volunteer fire department "has been called out to 35 motor vehicle collision calls on the eastbound/westbound 402.... Most notably, on Feb. 27, 2014, a 37-vehicle collision occurred, which led to multiple injuries and two fatalities.

"Any number of accidents, injuries and fatalities is unacceptable. The stretch of Highway 402 between markers 15 and 40 needs to be maintained in a proper and timely manner. Why are crews not being deployed to this section of the 402 in a timely manner? This is particularly puzzling given that the MTO depot is located right in Reeces Corners and there is adequate warning through weather networks and in the media.

"On behalf of the town of Plympton-Wyoming, and on behalf of the individuals and families who have experienced an accident or loss on this stretch of Highway 402, I call upon the" ministry "to investigate this matter immediately, before another death or serious accident occurs."

Mr. Speaker, that was a letter submitted by Mr. Lonny Napper, the mayor of Plympton-Wyoming—a good friend of mine, as well. I have also joined Mr. Napper in meetings with officials from the MTO. At that time, they still maintained that they're doing everything that needs to be done on this stretch of provincial highway. For all

the good that Bill 31 may do to increase road safety in Ontario, the ministry is overlooking a huge opportunity to improve how they handle road maintenance.

Just before I wind up—I've got a few minutes here—I wanted to talk about some other messaging. Ontario Provincial Police cite distracted driving as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of collisions in Ontario. The highway traffic safety—80% of collisions and 65% of near crashes have come from some type of driver inattention. Under impaired driving, Ontario is one of only three jurisdictions in Canada that currently has no sanctions for drug-impaired driving. I was surprised at that. One of the most progressive and, I would think, educated provinces in Canada, and we haven't moved to that already—I'm surprised. I intend to follow up with our critic and with the minister on that.

MADD Canada estimates that just less than 50% of all fatal collisions involved drug and/or alcohol impairment. Our caucus supports tough measures and expanded education to ensure that those impaired are not operating vehicles on Ontario's roadways. Given that the government has not introduced scientific testing for drug impairment, we do require further detail as to how and when this would work.

I talked a little earlier about medical reports. While the medical licence review system is the bane of many constituency offices because we have a lot of issues with people who are trying to get their licence back and we have healthy, diligent drivers who are having their licences stripped away, the lack of accompanying details as to who the minister will be able to empower to report these medical conditions to is another issue.

I've got a few other issues here I'd like to get on the record as well. Another one is about this information. I was surprised at this because I ran into this myself the other day. Approximately 40% of recommended light vehicle maintenance repairs are postponed or abandoned altogether each year, and this poses significant risks to motorists on the road. Underperformed maintenance is valued at over \$14 billion. Of this amount, \$500 million in brake work is underperformed, and the average vehicle is undermaintained by \$600 every year.

I know about this for a fact because in my other vehicle, my wife's car, I had it in just to get an oil change and get it winterized, and they rotated the tires. When they took the tires off—and I had work done at another shop—they found out that they had the wrong type of brake pads. This is a number one shop, and they had installed—I don't understand it all—16-inch tires and they had 17, and then they put the wrong brake pads on. If I hadn't taken the car in to get the oil checked—they were hesitant to talk about another—but they put it in writing. So I went back there the other day, just before I came back here. I didn't make a big scene about it. I went in and talked quietly to the guy on the desk because there were other people in the waiting room. I said, "Look." And he said, "Oh, no problem. Bring it in Tuesday or Monday. We'll get right on it," and didn't argue about it at all. I said, "Look, I'm telling you what the other pro-

fessionals said they found." I had no argument. When I read that, it made me think about that: How many other people are driving around out there with poor brakes, no brakes or undermaintained? Like I said, this was a well-known shop in Ontario. Maybe a guy made a mistake; I don't know. But I know it does happen because it happened to me.

Under the new subsection 7(12.0.1) it provides that if a person is in default of payment of a fine imposed for traffic or parking offences, no permit held by the person shall be validated and no permit shall be issued. The municipalities will like that because it will get them some of the money back that they are owed for these traffic infractions.

I see I'm running down my time here. This is the other one that has to do with trailer lengths, on tractor-trailers. Currently the act allows certain prescribed combinations of vehicles to have a maximum length of 25 metres. The bill will be amended to allow a maximum of 27.5 metres. I've got a private member's bill to do with LNG for transport for tractors on the highways. Certainly, the extra length—if we're looking at weight as well—is something that could come up under my private member's bill.

I think I'm running out of time here. For all of the good that Bill 31 may do to increase road safety in Ontario, I know the ministry is overlooking a huge opportunity, if we don't fully debate this bill, to look at recommendations from all over the province. I'm hoping that the minister and his parliamentary secretary will listen to these concerns and amend Bill 31 to include measures that will improve how the MTO responds to poor weather conditions. I think such an initiative will go a long way to improving road safety in Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're getting close to the end of the evening. Here we are at a late-evening sitting. It is such a privilege, again, being here tonight on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I'm so happy to hear the comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. Actually, I wanted to touch on his last comments that he just made in regard to the extension of the maximum length of 25 metres to 27.5 metres and some of the benefits. Actually, the Ontario Trucking Association are very much in support of that change so that they can start enhancing some of the accommodations. I personally have a lot of friends who do a lot of long travelling in their trucks. Part of their lives—actually, a good percentage, 80% to 90% of their lives, are spent in those vehicles. If you want to talk about a mobile home, it's not a mobile home, but it's actually their workplace as well. That would be very welcome to them.

Also to look at the enhancement of the actual safety mechanisms that you can put on those vehicles, which would include animal strike guards, like a moose bumper: For us northern members, not only is the bumper

important, it's also important to have an axe and a knife in your truck or in your car so you don't put that meat to waste. You can cut it up on the side of the road, bring it home and you can have a barbecue with it. There are a few things that we do differently in northern Ontario that you don't see in other locations.

You did bring up the obligations in regard to medical licence suspensions. The bill now requires regulations to prescribe exactly who must report a medical condition and exactly which medical conditions are prescribed and the individuals that are going to be entrusted with that. I think that's a step forward. It's going to be very key for us to identify who is going to be responsible and what rules there are going to be for those individuals.

There's so much more to be spoken about in this bill. I wish I had more time. Maybe at another time I will come back in the House and enjoy the comments.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You had an hour.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a great bill. Let's talk about it.

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

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I really appreciate the comments from the both the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin regarding the road safety bill that we've got before you.

I hear support for a lot of the parts of the bill, and I think that's extremely important. Like yourself, I wish I had all evening to talk about road safety because it's certainly near and dear to my heart.

I really wanted to touch on two things. I wish I could address them all. One is, especially, the member from Sarnia-Lambton's comments about impaired driving and in particular the drug-impaired driving sanctions we're looking at bringing forward. As we know, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. This is of great concern. So I am very excited to hear some support for the tougher measures that would be among the toughest sanctions in Canada. It looks at, if it's passed, making sure that following the alcohol-impaired driving sanctions to drug-impaired drivers would go forward. I think that that's really important, looking at escalating short-term licence suspensions of three, seven and 30 days.

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The other thing that I was really glad to hear support about was—I will look at my notes here—increasing fines for distracted driving. Distracted driving is certainly killing more people in cars and in Ontario now than almost every other thing. So we are looking at jumping ahead and making sure that we've got the legislation that will help us to deal with that, including increasing penalties from \$60 to \$500 to \$300 to \$1,000 for fines and adding three demerit points for distracted driving through regulation. That should go a long way to dealing with making sure that drivers are safer, keeping our Ontario roads safer.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It is always a pleasure to offer some words after hearing my esteemed colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Robert Bailey, Bobby Bailey as I call him, offer his thoughts to this House. He is one of those guys, I think, that just everybody looks at as the knowledgeable, wise grandpa. When he speaks, regardless of what party, people want to listen to Bob. They want to work with him.

I am so impressed. Bill 8, One Call, "call before you dig," he did with Paul Miller from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. They were able to get that through. He had the local food act, which was a private member's bill; again, he got that through. Not everybody gets even one private member's bill ever approved in this House. In my short three years here, Bobby Bailey has done two of those.

He is a very strong advocate for his constituents and tonight, again, conscientious, thoughtful and well-prepared. I think when he is speaking across the aisle to the minister about something as important as improving safety on our roads, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, he speaks with a lot of diligence, a lot of knowledge and a lot of sincerity. I think, hopefully, the minister will open up to Bob, reach out to him and take his thought processes to ensure that this piece of legislation, at the end of the day, is the best that it can be, to truly ensure that we are keeping people safe.

He talked a fair bit about poor weather down in his neck of the woods on the highways and how we can improve the safety of the people travelling on those roads. I think it would be well-received information by the minister to listen to Mr. Bailey. He certainly talked a little bit about drug and alcohol impairment and how we need to be addressing that to keep all people on our highways safe. Of course, every day that we come to this House, health and safety is of absolute paramount concern for all of us.

I think he did an outstanding job again of being able to say, "You know, we can support most of this type of legislation as long as there is the ability for the stakeholders to have a say, for the opposition to have a say, and ensure that at the end of the day, the legislation truly is the best that it can be."

Thank you very much, Mr. Bailey, and I look forward to hearing even more.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add some comments to the discussion and debate by the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I appreciate his ideas.

The bill is an omnibus bill. It's got everything and the kitchen sink in here. Some of the more positive factors in the bill are the provisions for larger cabs on semi trucks, something that I think will facilitate long-haul truckers to be able to do their jobs better and to be a lot more comfortable and take the time necessary to do it safely, and some provisions around drugged driving, and particularly distracted driving, which the member from

Sarnia–Lambton highlighted at the beginning of his discussion.

One of the things that worries us as New Democrats is the creation of the vehicle inspection centre system. My colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin pointed out that under this new section, the minister may establish a program for inspection of vehicles and the minister may enter into agreements with service providers. We are afraid that this could potentially result in another TSSA-type agency that doesn't have the accountability or transparency that you would expect and hope of a government agency or a pseudo arm's-length government agency when it came to issuing ordinances for drivers and the status of their vehicles. We know how obviously burdensome some of the provisions are already. We'd hate to see that get away from the minister.

I said the kitchen sink: Even here, for the members' knowledge: "Sections 160 and 178 ... which prohibit persons from attaching themselves to and being towed by a vehicle or street car ... are amended to include skateboards, in-line skates and any other type of conveyance." That's a good thing. You can no longer get on your Rollerblades, grab on to the bumper and hitch a ride. I think that's a good measure. I think that means that people are going to be safer in the province of Ontario, and I'm happy that the minister covered that important aspect in this bill.

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

The member for Sarnia–Lambton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wonder how the member from Windsor will get around, if we can't hang on to the back with a skateboard.

Anyway, I want to thank the members for Algoma–Manitoulin, Cambridge, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and, of course, Essex, for their kind words. Yes, this is a serious subject but we can have a little levity with it as

well—I didn't give all of my speech to Hansard here; I've got more left here. Anyway, they probably got all they need from me.

Anyway, I did want to draw back to two or three things. The road conditions are paramount, as everyone we heard from the north experiences. It's certainly nothing like we have here down in southwestern Ontario, but our issues are just as important. It's different; we don't have the ice like they have up there.

The other thing about distracted driving: I'll be honest; when I first got my cellphone I did answer it when I was driving. I had a couple of close calls, and from now on, I give it up. The new vehicle I have now has got—what do you call it? Remote—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Bluetooth.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Bluetooth or something—I don't know; Bluetooth, black tooth—anyway, I don't need to dial the phone anymore. I ignore it, anyway, but I know it's tempting when you have it with you to answer it.

The minister is here as well with us tonight. If we could look at an app—I know they're available—that somehow would disable these phones, printers, televisions, everything people have in their vehicle. I know the technology must be out there and I really would urge them to look at that. I think people would support that because I think it's so important to their families.

If you do one thing when you're travelling, tell your spouse or your family: "Look, I'm going to be unavailable in this certain period of time. Don't send me any messages, please." You'll be doing your family a favour and they'll be doing you a favour.

Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a privilege to be able to speak here tonight.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being half past 9, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2128.

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