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of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 8 October 2015

Jeudi 8 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI
ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today—kick off the debate, actually—for second reading of Bill 109, which is formally titled the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I'd like to take the opportunity to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, Mr. Mike Colle, the best parliamentary assistant anyone could have.

I'd also like to take this opportunity on behalf of all in this province to express our sincere gratitude to the firefighters and all front-line health and safety workers who risk their own lives and their own safety to protect the lives of others every day. They believe in the concept of public service; they don't do that work for the glory of the headlines. I don't think that the heroism they demonstrate day in and day out has gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the people in this House. I—and I think all Ontarians, for that matter—cannot thank those men and women enough.

This is one of the reasons we are proposing changes to three pieces of legislation which will, if they become law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario by strengthening protections, enhancing compensation and ensuring that broader public sector transitions can go as smoothly as possible, while still balancing the democratic rights of workers.

Speaker, if passed, this bill would amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act of 1997; it would also amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997; and,

finally, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act of the same year, 1997.

I'd like to talk first, briefly, about the proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. As I said previously, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence will go into further detail on the other two amendments to the other two acts—the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, shortly.

Bill 109 is going to provide much greater safeguards to all workers in the province through making changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Our first proposed amendment to the act being given second reading this morning is driven by our commitment to protect injured workers and their right to file a claim with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in this province. Workers in this province should know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim, and that their right will be protected.

The amendments that we're debating today would prohibit employers from taking any actions against any worker with the intent of discouraging that worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim for benefits for either work-related injuries or for illnesses. Those claims would be made with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The proposed amendments would also enable the WSIB to prosecute and to impose administrative penalties when employers try to impede or try to suppress those claims. This would strengthen the WSIB's efforts by legislating much stronger deterrence against employers engaged in any activities that would suppress or impede the right that injured workers have, in this province, to report a work-related injury or illness to the WSIB. The proposed amendment would also enable the WSIB to prosecute and impose administrative penalties when employers try to impede or suppress claims.

Speaker, to make sure that our laws are respected and that workers are protected, we are proposing an increase in the maximum corporate penalties for conviction of an offence under the WSIA from \$100,000 to \$500,000. Not reporting a workplace incident or accident is a violation of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. The WSIB has a zero-tolerance policy and strategy that prevents claim suppression in this province. When a person commits an offence under the WSIA, the WSIB may then lay charges and prosecute.

The bill would also mandate, by statute, that the WSIB board of directors appoint what is called a fair practices commissioner, and that would be an organizational ombudsperson for the WSIB. The fair practices commission

is an independent, neutral and confidential resource for injured workers, for employers and for service providers. It should be noted that its services are free of charge. These services could include looking into individual complaints, tracking complaint trends, identifying system-wide issues within the organization and, finally, recommending improvements to the WSIB itself. By legislatively requiring a fair practices commissioner, what we'll be doing is ensuring the commission's stability and longevity over time.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 109 would also enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker who is engaged in the same profession as the one in which the deceased received his or her injury. The issue, really, addresses how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who dies of an occupational disease who had no or perhaps low earnings on the date of the diagnosis because they had retired from work. This situation could arise because of the long latency period before the onset of many work-related diseases, such as cancer.

Currently, in situations where a worker dies of an occupational disease and had no earnings at the time of that diagnosis, the board's operational practice today is to calculate survivor benefits based on the average annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade in which the worker's disease was contracted. Speaker, the proposed amendment before you today would allow the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to continue the practice that is in place and enshrine it in legislation. I think it's a fair amendment and one that is overdue.

The proposed amendments would apply to payments for survivor benefits that are payable as of January 1, 1998, which was the date upon which the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, actually came into effect. What we are doing with Bill 109 and the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act is protecting in a much greater way the people of this province who work, and ensuring that they have the ability to avail themselves of the rights they have as workers in this province to obtain coverage under the WSIB without any interference or undue interference from employers.

Speaker, the amendments are based on the principles of fairness, balance and justice, and, if passed, will be important changes to the legislation we already have in the province of Ontario.

0910

Speaker, Ontario is one of the safest places in the world to work. That doesn't mean we can't do better; it does mean that we will do better. From time to time still, Ontario workers are injured on the job or, in the awful instances that we hear of from time to time, they actually lose their life on the job. Often that takes place as a result of a traumatic injury. But it can also be an illness that is contracted and doesn't appear for years; it just goes through a latent period and then the worker becomes aware that something has happened years back and they need coverage for that.

These changes are long overdue. I hope they enjoy the support of all members of the House. We've tried to

introduce them in a way such that I think all Ontarians will understand this is a fair way to do it, it's a balanced way to do it and it's a responsible way to do it. Certainly it has been formulated with much consultation with the WSIB itself, which is an organization that I think over the past few years has done tremendous things in the services it provides for injured workers and is also, I think, enjoying a good reputation with the employers of this province for providing good value, ensuring that workers get the treatment they receive, ensuring that they get it at the right time and ensuring that the unfunded liability that has plagued this organization in years past is reduced, as the Provincial Auditor asked that it be.

Speaker, my parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Labour, Mike Colle, will now speak to the other elements of the bill, which include further details, as I spoke of earlier, on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, as well as the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. I hope that all members of the House will see fit to support this bill when it comes to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you to the minister for bringing this very comprehensive series of reforms forward for the people of Ontario, especially those who are injured on the job, and for those who have dangerous jobs, like our firefighters and our first responders. I know the minister is very proactive in listening and acting on recommendations brought forward by all the partners in labour in Ontario: the employers, the workers, the unions, all the experts who are out there. This is a culmination of all that ongoing discussion that the minister really takes a lot of time to do.

So this came forward as a result of all these discussions and proposals put forward. Bill 109 amends, as the minister said, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act from 1997, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and also the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, which is a complex piece of legislation but is another needed amendment.

I was talking to the executive director of the construction association of Ontario yesterday. He was saying that there's just a time for all of us, whether we're workers, employers or ordinary citizens, to slow down sometimes and ensure that we consider the safety aspect of work. All of us assume that buildings are going to be built, hospitals are going to be built, roads are going to be repaired, critical hydro infrastructure is going to be kept up to speed, and we all want it done yesterday. We're in such a hurry to have this work done, we forget that the workers out there are sometimes in a very precarious situation. We must all put in our culture of work, I think, this big "S" of safety. Certainly workers know it is critical to work in a methodical, safe way, because they are risking their lives.

I think there are 250 cranes in the sky in Toronto. Imagine how dangerous that kind of work is, the responsibility the company has that maintains the equipment, the workers who operate it, the workers and the public in the surrounding area. We just basically think that's auto-

matic. Well, it isn't automatic. It's just like the 1.5 million people who travel on public transit every day in Toronto, and probably another million in the greater Toronto area. The public transit alone—the buses, the trains, the GO system—is very technical, precarious work at times. We've got to ensure that our bus drivers, train operators, mechanics, maintenance workers—everybody—is given the proper support in ensuring safety. Safety, safety, safety: It is not automatic. That's what this bill tries to support: the whole idea that people do get hurt on the job, sad to say, but they need protection.

As the minister said, in some cases the injury is latent. I think of Johns Manville in Scarborough. All those workers worked for decades with asbestos. They didn't know that they were basically contracting cancer, and the cancer didn't appear till decades later. That's what happens in many workplaces. You think the workplace is safe, but there may be an air quality problem, there may be some kind of work procedure that causes an injury that comes after the fact. That's one of the things this act tries to change, to protect workers who receive these injuries after the fact. They could be retired.

I know that firefighters have been bringing that forward for years. They've been saying, "We've attended all these fires. Sometimes they're chemical fires." Then, after a number of years, there is a frightening series of firefighters who have cancer, and they all say, "Well, listen, we didn't know at the time. It could have been the result of those fires we had to deal with 10 years ago." These are some of the protections we're putting in place with Bill 109.

As I mentioned in this reference to firefighters, whom we are further protecting in this legislation, in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence just this summer we had our annual Marlee-Ville Festival, on Marlee Avenue. One of the participants at the festival suffered a seizure. We think it was a diabetic seizure. Luckily, the gentleman didn't hit his head on the concrete sidewalk when he collapsed. Right away we called 911, and the first responders there were the firefighters. They came 10 minutes before the ambulance. As a result of that quick response by our firefighters, through heavy traffic—it was about 5 o'clock—that individual was put on the ambulance, which came later, rushed to hospital and saved, I'm sure, a lot of grief going forward.

We also had a massive, potentially dangerous, fire on Castlefield Avenue a year ago, when a foam mattress factory burned down. It was a multi-alarm fire. Firefighters were hundreds of feet up on their ladders trying to put out this fire to ensure that it didn't spread. They did an amazing job. They protected the surrounding properties—the neighbourhood—and no one got hurt. It was a pretty complex, precarious fire incident. This is what is done every day, and these are the everyday dangers our workers face, especially our firefighters and first responders. This bill tries to remedy that with more protections.

0920

As we say, our ongoing efforts to help, especially workers who work in dangerous situations—and it could

be any worker. It could be people who seem to have so-called inside office jobs; they could be in a dangerous situation. People who work in construction, people who work in mines—every day there are hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who need to be protected.

According to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, there are 11,000 full-time firefighters and 19,000 volunteer firefighters. That's a lot of people who are out there trying to protect us every day. Our legislation here, Bill 109, would provide the Fire Protection and Prevention Act with new substantive procedural and enforcement provisions, so there are going to be new enforcement provisions in this bill. These amendments would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater and more natural alignment with the Labour Relations Act.

In other words, a lot of the workplace rules of safety and protection that the firefighters work under—up until this proposed bill, if passed—aren't under the Labour Relations Act. What this bill is doing is taking a lot of those activities that come under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act and folding them into the Labour Relations Act. That's a significant change. Therefore, what we're really doing is putting a lot of the practices that normal workers enjoy under the Labour Relations Act, as also applicable to firefighters. Before, it was separate. That's one of the most significant things that Bill 109 is doing.

By doing that, what we are really doing, hopefully, is reducing the need to go to court to get remedial action. As you know, Mr. Speaker, courts can be very lengthy, very expensive, very complex and very adversarial. But by putting a lot of these activities in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act under the Labour Relations Act, we are going to hopefully reduce the need of appealing to our judicial system, which will save time, money and effort.

The proposed amendments would enhance the Fire Protection and Prevention Act by adding very similar key legislative provisions already available to those covered by the Labour Relations Act. These are some of the key provisions where the Fire Protection and Prevention Act will now be covered by the Labour Relations Act:

- unfair labour practice protections;
- expedited grievance arbitration;
- union security and related provisions;
- religious objections;
- Ontario Labour Relations Board authority to enforce all provisions under part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act;
- the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written settlement of a grievance, and the ability of the parties to file an arbitration decision in the Superior Court of Justice and have it enforced as an order of that court; and
- the power of the Ontario Labour Relations Board to grant interim orders.

All of these existing provisions in the Ontario Labour Relations Act will now also be folded into—or vice versa—the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. These are significant changes.

As we all concur, in this province we all appreciate the incredible efforts of our firefighters in communities all across Ontario. I think these changes will certainly protect them even further in their workplace.

The third element of Bill 109 consists of legislative amendments to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, which was passed in 1997. Under these proposed amendments, when an event in the broader public occurs to which the act applies, such as certain amalgamations or restructurings, if a prescribed minimum percentage of employees in the new bargaining units are represented by the same union, that union would be ordered to be the bargaining agent for the new unit without a representation vote.

As happened in Toronto, we had the amalgamation of the six cities and boroughs into one; we had it done in Ottawa; we had it in Hamilton; we had it in the Lindsay area—Kawartha Lakes. When you bring those entities together, the workers and their contracts and their protections and union arrangements all of a sudden are affected by these amalgamations. What this amendment here does is try to accommodate the reality of unions so we don't go through a long process of reconfiguring the associations that are already in existence. It just streamlines that so we don't get these long, drawn-out confrontations when changes are made administratively by amalgamations in this province.

We have been told, as the minister has said, that such a change would help to reduce time and disruption during events such as mergers. Speaker, as you know, our government is committed to advancing safe, fair and respectful workplaces. That's why these amendments have come forward in Bill 109. We're trying to increase the level of fairness by strengthening protections for all of these workers, and we will ensure that the broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible, while still balancing the democratic rights of workers.

Strengthening protections for workers while supporting business is part of the government's plan to build a stronger Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the critical thing is to have this partnership, this combined effort, whether it be an employer, whether it be workers, whether it be their unions, to make this province a province that works for people, provides services for people and protects people. So it's not that the government can do this by itself. The government needs those partners to consult, to collaborate and to make improvements.

It is not a static thing. The Fire Protection and Prevention Act was brought forward in this Legislature in 1997. It is an updating of that as a result of these ongoing consultations and suggestions made by workers, by unions, by employers. We've tried, with this legislation, to strike a balance. It is never possible, and the pages on their last day should know this: You could never please everybody. It's just like your mother can't please all the kids in the family, nor can government ever please everyone. But you try to be fair.

I know that in Hamilton they tried to call themselves the "fair" city of Hamilton. In other words, you can't

give everybody everything they want but you try to give people everything they need to the best of your ability. In this legislation, whether it's in Hamilton, whether it's in Ottawa, whether it's in Peterborough, we try to ensure, whether you're a firefighter, you're a factory worker or you're someone providing a service, big or small, that there are these protections in the workplace safety act that will ensure that you get a fair shake. God forbid, if you are injured on the job, if you develop an illness—in this bill we also try to amend the procedures around survivor's benefits. Those are very complex areas, because if that person, sadly—the partner or the husband or wife—passes away on the job, the survivor's benefits pension is critically important. The way that's handled could affect the life of that survivor, plus the family, so we need to do these things in a way that is compassionate, comprehensive and fair.

That's what's in Bill 109. It is an area of legislation that has responded to the requests by various stakeholders, our firefighters, by municipalities, by employers, to try and update some of these acts that were brought in in 1997. I just hope that the members from all sides will come up with further ideas on how we can strengthen this, how we can take into account all the complexities and make this a good piece of legislation.

I look forward to everyone participating in this debate, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the relatively brief remarks by the Minister of Labour and his parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. I think it's fair to point out that the government actually has 60 minutes for its lead-off speech and they chose to use about 30 minutes, but maybe that gives more time to the opposition, so we appreciate that, I guess, in one sense.

Both Liberal speakers gave an interesting presentation about the bill, but I think there could have been perhaps more information about what the bill actually does. Certainly I appreciate the opportunity to have met with some of the minister's staff earlier this week for a briefing that I requested on the bill that I would have hoped might have been offered, but I had requested it and they responded and we've had a chance to begin the dialogue. Our caucus is very interested in Bill 109 and want to ensure that it's thoroughly debated.

I want to express my appreciation to the minister for his quick message of congratulations when I was appointed our party's labour critic and his willingness to have a more comprehensive briefing, which we're getting together to do this afternoon. So that's forthcoming, and I appreciate that.

But I would have to say that in neither speech did we hear any information about what this bill is going to cost. Surely there has been a comprehensive and detailed financial analysis of what impact these changes will have, particularly on WSIB premiums. As we know, employers

pay the premiums, and that's an ongoing concern of the business community. They want to make sure that they're getting good value for their money and that the system is being administered well and fairly, but they are also interested in premiums. I know that the great work that has been done by the current chair and her management team at the WSIB has resulted in no increase in premiums in the last year or two, and that's a good thing. But I would ask the minister in his response, or his parliamentary assistant, to explain to the House: What is the impact on premiums and/or what is going to be the impact on the unfunded liability of the WSIB as a result of Bill 109?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have the chance to weigh in a little bit on Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour. I look forward to, later in the debate, weighing in a little bit longer than the two minutes, certainly after we've had a chance to hear from our labour critic, who I know is going to have many thoughts to share. And as we heard from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence that he's looking forward to other members offering ideas to make this stronger and the best bill that it can be, I am sure you will be hearing lots and lots from the opposition in terms of ways to strengthen and improve this.

I see the three major sections in this bill, and I'll just take a minute and 10 seconds to address the third section, which is familiar in that, three weeks before Bill 109 hit the table here, I introduced my Bill 98. I appreciated everyone's support for that in that discussion on protecting the victims of occupational disease.

What I see in this bill, while some parts align, is that it's only half of what my bill was intending to do, and I think we agreed that the spirit of that, we all were in support of. I know that I'm looking forward to bringing forth those ideas and making sure that the voices of workers don't get lost in the shuffle.

Bill 109 addresses section 48 of the WSIA, whereas mine was 48 and 43. That section 43, where we're looking at workers and what they are entitled to, I really think warrants full discussion. We need to move forward because, as the Minister of Labour said, these diseases may be contracted, but they don't appear for years. It shouldn't be when it's diagnosed; it should be when the injury actually occurred. So I look forward to having these discussions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to rise in my place in the Legislature this morning and add my voice to those of the Minister of Labour, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Oshawa, of course a significant defender of workers' rights, with a great private member's bill that she has put forward; and of my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

This is an important piece of legislation on so many fronts—two minutes won't do it justice—but the modernization of our statute is long overdue. We've had significant input from stakeholders. I want to applaud the Minister of Labour for his work and his response to those calls for modernization.

Why is that important? Because it will provide greater tools and access to resolve disputes. As the member from Eglinton–Lawrence noted, keeping things out of the court is in everybody's interest. It lowers expense and just makes greater sense. That's an important step forward.

Ensuring that our broader public sector transitions go smoothly, and as smoothly as possible, to create that kind of efficiency and stability that we all want and need is really important. Of course, the bottom line is that providing a fair, just and efficient workers' compensation system is something we all want.

I want to just take a minute and talk about the strengthening as regards the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. You know, Speaker, we all enjoy and actually really are blessed by the hard-working firefighters that we have in this province. Burlington is no exception. We have a tremendous group of men and women who put their lives on the line for us every single day. Since safety is our most effective insurance policy, giving them the tools to be more effective and more efficient in the daily execution of their work, where they put their lives on the line every day, is incredibly important.

I look forward to greater debate on this very important piece of legislation, because we all want a modernized set of statutes when it comes to our workforce, today and into the future. Again, I want to applaud the Minister of Labour for this important step forward and, again, give a shout-out to our men and women in uniform who save us every day from fires and the dangers that lurk just around the corner. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to make some preliminary comments on the basis of the debate so far. I don't think there is anyone who disputes the importance of creating safe working conditions for employed people.

Certainly we've seen some egregious, illegal activities. The Ministry of Labour is under constant pressure to make sure that safety protocols are maintained in this province. When you look at other jurisdictions, where there are none or there are very few, people are at tremendous risk, so it's really very important that we maintain those safe working conditions and that they move along with the different types of pressures, machinery, sites and things like that—chemicals, whatever—that increasingly become part of those safe working conditions.

Like my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, I would assume that there has been some costing done of the details of implementation. Certainly the business community has to be looking at the balance between their ability to maintain and keep up with the changes and the cost pressures that those might include. So I think it's

really important for the debate in the House to reflect the knowledge of a cost-benefit analysis that would allow for the business community to embrace this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the minister for a two-minute response.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for Wellington–Halton Hills; the member for York–Simcoe, who just spoke; the member for Oshawa, who has been involved in this bill earlier; and my colleague the member for Burlington for their comments—and my parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, for the comments he added to mine.

A couple of members across the floor noted that I only took nine minutes in my opening remarks. Those of us who have sat on a council, those of us who have been a mayor or a councillor still to this day often look to this place and think that perhaps people talk a little too much here and don't get a lot done. Certainly you could tell the people that have served on a council, because they've learned that it doesn't matter what their political outlook, philosophy or affiliation is; they have learned how to use words, I think, in a much better way than we often do here, and they accomplish a lot more and talk a lot less. There is a little bit of that in there, and certainly that applies, I think, to all members here.

0940

People have asked about the costing. I think if you look to the WSIB and its practices in the past short period of time, the way they've conducted their affairs, compared to how they were conducted in the past, you've seen a tremendous improvement in the management of the WSIB, and not to the detriment of the coverage that's provided. The unfunded liability of the WSIB continues to fall. We're way ahead of schedule. We're doing, I think, a tremendous job. That, we intend to continue. There's nothing in these bills that would impede that in any way.

Certainly, for the working men and women, for those people on the front lines who protect us, there's something in this bill for everybody. It makes life a little easier for those who have been injured at work, it emphasizes the seriousness of committing an offence under these acts, and it also helps organized labour in the sense that they are able to conduct their affairs in a much more efficient manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of our caucus and do the lead-off speech, as the official opposition critic for labour, in response to the government's Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour, which stands in the name of the Minister of Labour, introduced for first reading on May 28, 2015, and now called for second reading this morning. I certainly appreciate this opportunity.

As important as this bill is, and I believe it is a vitally important bill, I think the number one question at Queen's Park today is who is going to be in the House at

3:37 p.m. this afternoon, when the first pitch is thrown down at the Rogers Centre, and who has baseball tickets. I have to say that I don't have baseball tickets. I've received no invitations, alas. So I will be here participating this afternoon. Certainly, I wish the Blue Jays luck as they enter the playoffs. I think it's going to be a very exciting month of October for the people of Toronto, all of Ontario, and indeed all of Canada. I know, Mr. Speaker, that really doesn't pertain directly to Bill 109, but maybe there's some connection there, nonetheless.

I think that it's important to talk about the fiscal context upon which all legislation is presented in this House because, obviously, the strength of the economy is very important to the well-being of the province and the people of the province. Certainly, the budgetary policy of the provincial government is one of the key components of economic leadership, so, again, I feel compelled to point out the fiscal context upon which Bill 109 is introduced.

We know the government projects a deficit this year of \$8.5 billion. That is, in fact, down marginally from last year, at \$10.9 billion, so there has been some improvement in the deficit year over year. But, again, this is a projected deficit for the fiscal year that we're in now, 2015-16. The fiscal year, of course, that we're in now will end at the end of March of next year.

It's also important to point out that the projected provincial net debt is almost \$300 billion in the province of Ontario today. It's projected in the budget to go up to \$298.9 billion. That is up dramatically from last year, year over year: \$14.7 billion higher than it was last year. Last year, the net debt was expected to be \$284.2 billion. So it's a substantial—dramatic, in fact—increase in the debt, year over year.

Provincial government spending this year is expected to be \$131.9 billion. That's up, again, year over year, up \$2.4 billion. The government would lead us to believe that they're holding the line on spending, but in fact spending is actually increasing by \$2.4 billion. Last year, the spending came in at \$129.5 billion.

Another very important number is the net debt per capita. That is, in effect, the amount that each man, woman and child owes because of years and years of government overspending. The net debt per capita is \$21,642. That's up \$870 from last year. Last year, the number was \$20,772. That gives people a better understanding and illustration of what we owe as individuals, if you break it down. That's just provincial debt, Mr. Speaker; that doesn't include the national debt.

Another important number is the debt-to-GDP ratio. Of course, that is a comparison of the provincial debt in relation to the size of our economy and the value of the goods and services that we produce. That is, of course, our gross domestic product. That ratio is 39.8%, up from 39.4% last year. Just to, again, put this number in some sort of context, before the recession in 2007-08, the debt to GDP ratio was 26.2%. Now, it's almost 40%. This is a very worrisome trend that I think the government needs to acknowledge, and acknowledge that they're going to

take greater steps to reduce that ratio back to a more acceptable level.

What does that mean? It means that interest payments on the debt are rising. This year we're spending \$11.4 billion on interest, up from last year. Last year, we spent \$10.7 billion—

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: We have a very important labour bill before us, Bill 109. I haven't heard one reference to this very important labour bill. He's talking about the federal election campaign of Stephen Harper. Let's talk about labour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much for that point of order. I'm hoping the member will tie it in quickly to the bill, and I'd ask him to do so.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I made absolutely no reference to the federal election campaign, Mr. Speaker, but apparently the member heard something else.

The fact is, the interest payments on the debt, \$11.4 billion—and maybe some of the government members are annoyed to hear this, but these are the numbers from their budget. I'm not exaggerating. As a matter of fact, they're the government's own numbers. The interest on the debt is the fastest-growing line item in the budget: 5.7% average annual growth out to 2017-18. So we see a financial picture that is very worrisome, and a budgetary policy that creates severe concern, certainly on the opposition benches and I think across the province.

Certainly, workers and employers and employees, all of whom have an interest in labour law, are all concerned about this, too, Mr. Speaker, once they know the facts. We see a government that continues to engage in spending patterns that are unsustainable and unaffordable. So, yes, that is the fiscal context upon which all of the legislation that's going to be debated today will be debated, including Bill 109.

We see, with Bill 109, that the government is proposing to amend three specific statutes: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997; and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. There are three schedules in this bill, and they are intended to amend three acts. The bill looks like it's 14 pages, and it is complex and detailed. Again, I think we need more clarification from the government as to what they're proposing to do.

For our part, as the official opposition, I would say that we support fair labour laws in the province of Ontario. We believe there needs to be a balance which respects the rights of workers and the needs of employers. We need to grow the economy and create new, good-paying jobs, and we need to strengthen Ontario's competitiveness so that we can win in the global economy. We see, of course, with the trade negotiations that just concluded in recent days, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that the government has participated in negotiating—the federal government, and the provinces have

received some information about the details, I hope. I would hope that they will be consulted. The provincial government hopefully will have more details. Hopefully, as the details come out, we'll have a better understanding of what has been discussed.

I think, clearly, we have to be part of that trade negotiation, Mr. Speaker. This negotiation, which has taken place over several years, I believe, will have a significant impact on the world economy. Canada just simply couldn't be left on the sidelines. I hope the deal is in the best interests of Ontario, in the best interests of workers, in the best interests of business and our farm community. I look forward to seeing the details, as well. But certainly we need to see more in terms of what has been decided.

In terms of Bill 109, there's an important component that affects the fire service in the province of Ontario. I would echo the remarks that were made by the minister in terms of his appreciation for the work that is done by our professional firefighters as well as our small-town—what we have always called the volunteer fire service. Of course, Mr. Speaker, in some cases, small communities are paying either an honorarium or an hourly wage to their part-time firefighters, as we call them. We certainly owe a huge debt of gratitude to our fire service, everyone that's involved, and their families, too, because we know it can be a very dangerous occupation.

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Firefighters demonstrate enormous courage. They are highly trained, skilled individuals and professionals. Their courage is on display every day and they are prepared to risk their lives to keep us safe. Obviously, from our perspective as the official opposition, we support our fire service and all the individuals who are involved with them. We value what they do. We appreciate it very, very much.

It's my understanding, from what I've heard and what I've been told, that the changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act have been developed in consultation with some of our fire service, in particular, the Ontario Professional Firefighters Association. I would have to say that those recommendations in Bill 109 seem to be reasonable as they affect the fire service, from what I've seen so far. But I would also need to point out that the changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act require additional public discussion. Our PC caucus has many questions, and we will be asking questions over the course of this debate. We would hope the government will respond. That's really what debate is supposed to be all about around here. If we raise issues of concern, you would anticipate and hope that the government will address those questions during the course of the debate.

But I also believe and anticipate that this bill will be going to a standing committee of the Legislature for public hearings. I think that would, obviously, be a necessity, allowing the groups and individuals who have ideas, concerns and suggestions to improve the bill, or if they have serious opposition to some of the provisions, that they be given an opportunity to do that.

Of course, in the two-minute responses that we just had to the minister's speech and his parliamentary assistant's, my colleague from York-Simcoe and I both asked a similar question, which was, "What is this bill going to cost? What is this going to cost for the employers?" Because, of course, we know the employers pay the premiums for WSIB. Employers have an interest in that, and the employer groups, from time to time, express concerns about increasing premiums because it becomes a payroll cost. I wouldn't say it's a tax because the premiums are not a tax, but they are a cost to having employees.

It's a payroll cost that is not reflective of your profitability. What you have to pay is based to some degree on your safety record as an employer. But also there are, obviously, minimums that have to be respected. The reality is, employers have to be able to meet their payroll costs as the first order of business, I guess. Even if they are unprofitable and not making money, they still have to make those payments. These are very important concerns.

As we know, over the years, the WSIB has had an issue with respect to its unfunded liability, meaning, there are more commitments, financial commitments and promises that have been made than there is a plan for money to come in the door to pay for them. I know, again, the current WSIB chair, Elizabeth Witmer, our former deputy leader and former colleague here in the Legislature, has done an outstanding job of addressing many of these concerns, working with employers and employees to address the concerns with respect to unfunded liability. Obviously, the injured workers have an interest in the unfunded liability as well, because if there isn't enough money to pay for the pensions or for their benefits, then where is the money going to come from? They obviously share that concern and should.

I would also say that the WSIB has made significant improvement in its unfunded liability, and it's going in the right direction. I believe they have a long-term plan to reduce it—to eliminate it. I don't have the details in front of me—the actual numbers—but from what I've read and heard, they are making good progress, and they deserve acknowledgment for that.

That comes back to the basic question that we asked during the questions and comments: What is this going to cost? These changes to WSIB: What are those going to cost in terms of premiums or in terms of upward pressure on the unfunded liability? Again, valid questions—I think they're valid. I would anticipate and expect that there has been a comprehensive financial analysis done. The government has yet to table it. We would ask them to do so. It has to come out at some point. I would hope that, during the course of debate, subsequent government speakers will address that question. If they don't, we're going to keep asking.

Bill 109: schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, amendments. Bill 109 incorporates significant portions of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, including unfair labour

practices, membership in associations and expedited rights to arbitration. The bill will permit associations to require the inclusion of closed-shop language in a collective agreement, with features such as mandatory association dues, deductions and provisions requiring membership in the association, or giving preference of employment to members of an association.

We understand that these powers are to be balanced by rights for the firefighters as well. For example, expelled or suspended members or those who have been denied membership in an association will be protected on certain grounds, such as in the case of reasonable dissent. This is a key issue for many small-town fire services, Mr. Speaker, because we have been informed that in some cases, this will allow double-hatters to continue their volunteer work without fear of reprisal.

Bill 109 will also allow labour disputes, under this act, to be heard by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as opposed to an Ontario court. Of course, if the disputes don't have to go to court, that frees up some of the court resources for other cases. Hopefully, it can be dealt with by more specifically trained labour relations hearings officers, who are more expert in labour relations law—and deal with these disputes in a more expeditious way, too, I would hope.

Under Bill 109, firefighters will be able to opt out of union membership or even paying union dues if being a member conflicts with their religious beliefs. I am told the changes found in schedule 1 in some cases will apply retroactively.

What we have been told is that this particular schedule incorporates the spirit, I guess, of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. So some of the provisions of the Labour Relations Act and the spirit of it are reflected in the firefighters' legislation.

In 2002, a fire chief in my riding came into my constituency office to inform me about a concern that he had. It was with respect to something that he called double-hatters. Double-hatters are full-time professional firefighters who work for a full-time department, typically in the city, but who may live in a small town nearby. On their days off, they want to volunteer their skills and services to their small-town fire service in their home community. In some cases back in March 2002, we were told that the Ontario professional firefighters' union was telling its members that they had to quit as volunteers or part-time firefighters in their home communities, and if they didn't, they might be kicked out of their association or union; and if they were kicked out of their union, the collective agreement would place in jeopardy their full-time positions.

I took this issue up, researched it thoroughly and brought a bill into the Legislature, Bill 30, to protect the right of small-town double-hatter firefighters to continue to serve in their home communities as well as in their full-time professional job in the city that they might commute to. This became a very controversial private member's bill.

In the end, we had extensive debate. I asked the legislative library to look into it. They told me that there were

more hours of debate on this Bill 30 than any other private member's bill in the history of the province of Ontario; they went back as far as 1950 and then they stopped looking. So I think it's fair to say that this bill received more hours of debate than any other private member's bill in the history of the province.

Again, this was 13 years ago, but I remember it well. Our party was in government. In the end, I insisted on a third reading vote, and the government of the day allowed that to take place. The bill was defeated at third reading, but I was encouraged by the support of two thirds of our caucus at that time who were present in the House and voted for it—but one third voted against it. On the opposition side, of course, the New Democrats voted against it. The Liberals, in opposition at that time, most of them voted against it, but they were whipped. I know that for a fact: They were whipped to vote against it. I believe three of their members decided to support it, one of whom is here today, and I appreciate that very much, the support that he gave the bill at that time.

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I have always said I would continue to stand up for the rights of double-hatters to continue to serve their home communities as firefighters, and I have always done that. We've raised this in the House from time to time when we know there's an issue, but the fact is, it's my understanding that this Bill 109 is an attempt to provide a legislated solution to protect two-hatters, in some cases. I would have to say I express appreciation to the government for bringing this forward. If this is indeed the solution that we were seeking in 2002, we've waited 13 years to get it and obviously I very much appreciate it.

There were extensive public hearings on Bill 30, as well. Again, this goes back 13 years. I do want to make reference to comments at the hearings by the fire marshal of Ontario. Because, of course, my Bill 30 was supported by the firefighters of Ontario, which are the volunteer firefighters in the province—essentially the small-town and rural firefighters. We heard from the parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, that there are approximately—I think he said 19,000 part-time or volunteer firefighters in the province of Ontario and I think he said 11,000 professional or full-time firefighters.

The fact is, my bill was supported by the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, which is the volunteer fire service; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or AMO, which was expressing support for my bill; and the fire chiefs association of Ontario, representing all the fire chiefs across the province, including the big-city ones. Those stakeholders were supportive of the bill.

I think it's also important to point out, though, that the fire marshal of Ontario at the time, Bernard Moyle, who was the senior fire official in the province working within the Ministry of the Solicitor General at the time, came to committee, expressed support for my bill and suggested that it was needed.

Here is what he said at committee. This was the justice committee on 21 October, 2002. He said:

“In most full-time and composite fire departments, career firefighters are represented by local associations that are affiliated with both the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the International Association of Fire Fighters. The constitutions of both of these organizations prohibit career firefighters serving as volunteer firefighters. As a result, the OPFFA has periodically directed that members stop two-hatting or be charged under their constitution, which could result in being expelled from the association.

“Expelling two-hatters is problematic because many fire service collective agreements in Ontario require their members to maintain membership in the firefighters' associations as a condition of full-time employment. This common stipulation means that a full-time firefighter found guilty of a breach of the association's constitution and bylaws could have their membership revoked and consequently be ineligible to continue their full-time employment. Understandably, career firefighters who are serving as volunteer or part-time firefighters would be under considerable pressure to resign if their full-time career was put at risk.

“The conflict between the practice of two-hatting and the association's constitutional provisions is producing tension and instability in Ontario's fire protection delivery system. My office was officially notified of a potentially serious situation involving two-hatters by the chief of the Hamilton fire department on February 8, 2002. In addition to the letter from the city of Hamilton, a number of other letters and inquiries on this subject were received indicating that some career firefighters were receiving letters from their association requesting proof of resignation from their part-time employment within 30 days.

“Information received by my office indicated that the scope of the IAFF”—again, that's the International Association of Fire Fighters—“activity was not limited to Ontario but was also occurring in some areas of the United States. As a result, I established an internal working group to examine the issue of two-hatting and to determine whether there was a public safety concern arising from the OPFFA's increased activity to enforce its constitutional provisions against its members who were two-hatting.

“Under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the fire marshal has discretionary power to review and monitor municipal fire protection services to determine if they meet the mandatory requirements of the FPPA and if a serious threat to public safety exists. This was the authority we used to constitute the working group to review the two-hatter issue. Because of the scope and nature of this issue, my office proceeded under the potential serious threat section of the FPPA to review the impact of the OPFFA initiatives to enforce their constitution.

“The” Ontario fire marshal's “concern was that these actions had the potential to result in a sudden withdrawal of the services of two-hatters throughout the province. The right-to-work issue is not part of the mandate of the OFM and was not addressed in our analysis of the

situation. In fact public safety was, and continues to be, the OFM's single focus in this matter.

"I would like to now review the steps taken by my office in attempting to reach a non-legislated solution."

The fire marshal went on, "A brief meeting was held with representatives of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association in mid-February 2002"—again, this meeting took place about a month before I was informed of the issue—"to informally discuss the issue. At that time, the OFM committed to working with affected stakeholder groups to determine if there was any common ground that could be used to arrive at a sustainable solution to the problem. The OPFFA and the OAFCA"—that's the chiefs' association—"agreed to work with the OFM"—the fire marshal—"and other stakeholders. Moreover, the OPFFA agreed not to aggressively pursue charging their members until such time as the matter had been reviewed and discussed with the stakeholders. They also committed not to take any action that would jeopardize public safety.

"A draft discussion paper was prepared by the OFM working group and distributed to the stakeholders for review and comment. The paper concluded that there was no immediate threat to public safety at this time, but a sudden or widespread withdrawal of two-hatter services would have varying degrees of repercussions to municipalities, up to and including a potential serious threat.

"Formal individual discussions were then initiated to obtain the positions of the following stakeholders: the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario"—that is the volunteer fire service association—"the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; the International Association of Fire Fighters; the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The first meeting was held with representatives of the OPFFA and the IAFF on May 14, 2002.

"On May 22, 2002," the fire marshal went on, "MPP Ted Arnott introduced a private member's bill, Bill 30. We now had the consultation process as well as a proposed legislated solution on the table.

"The consultation process continued, and the first joint stakeholder meeting was held on August 1, 2002, to determine whether a non-legislated solution could be found. Several ideas were discussed and proposals put forth, one by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs which involved grandfathering existing two-hatters, and another by the OPFFA which involved the phasing out of two-hatters in a manner that would not jeopardize public safety. At the request of AMO, the parties were requested to provide more detail on their proposals.

"The proposals were sent to all the stakeholders for review and comment. In response to these proposals, both the FFAO and AMO advised my office that they could not support the proposals and were supporting a legislated solution.

"During the discussions, it was apparent that no mechanism existed to allow any of the parties to bind their membership to any agreement that may have been arrived at by the parties. For example, AMO could not

bind municipalities"—it didn't have the power to bind municipalities—"to an agreement reached with the OPFFA, nor could the OPFFA guarantee that their locals or individual members would adhere to an agreement. Certainly, all were in a position to influence their membership." But they couldn't compel them to agree.

"Moreover, the parties appeared to be polarized in their positions related to phasing out two-hatters. For example, the FFAO, AMO and the OAFCA do not support the phasing out of career firefighters who serve as volunteer part-time firefighters, which is the position of the OPFFA. There simply was no common ground for agreement on a non-legislated solution.

"For the reasons stated above, it is our opinion that an enforceable and sustainable non-legislated solution to the two-hatter issue is not achievable.

"In a letter distributed to members of the OPFFA on October 1, 2002, by Mr. Fred LeBlanc, president of the association, the moratorium on secondary employment charges was lifted, which could significantly increase the activity by the OPFFA membership and potentially impact on public safety.

"It is my understanding that the OPFFA committed to the moratorium as long as constructive dialogue was taking place. This is no longer the case," the fire marshal said at the committee, "so the moratorium was lifted. This is not intended as a criticism of the OPFFA, as they have a legal right to enforce their constitution. However, the lifting of the moratorium by the OPFFA will likely exacerbate the existing tension and uncertainty in both the fire service and municipal communities, and it is unclear to what extent and degree this action will impact on existing two-hatters.

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"The sudden or phased withdrawal of two-hatters from communities dependent on volunteer fire departments could significantly impact on their ability to provide an adequate level of fire protection and may in some cases pose a potential serious threat to public safety for the following reasons.

"There would be a loss of experience, leadership and expertise in some communities. In fact, for that very reason, even a single two-hatter can make a significant difference in a small rural community. For example, some two-hatters serve as senior officers and captains and have fire prevention and training responsibilities, which are key functions in any fire department.

"There may be a reduced capacity for providing adequate emergency responses during weekdays, when two-hatters are more readily available due to their shift schedules.

"Increased response times may occur, at least until replacements can be recruited and adequately trained, if in fact replacements are available within the community. There may be an increased time in which to assemble an adequate fire attack team and a potential short-term reduction in fire ground effectiveness, resulting in greater fire losses.

“The time required to recruit and train full-time, part-time or volunteer firefighters can be expensive, creating short-term delivery difficulties. In some communities there may not be a pool of potential candidates available to become volunteer firefighters and a community may not be able to afford hiring full-time firefighters, creating a potential public safety issue.

“In a number of communities that have a heavy reliance on two-hatters, the sudden withdrawal of their services could create a potential serious threat to public safety.

“In conclusion,” he said, “there is a provincial and public interest in protecting two-hatters who wish to serve as volunteer firefighters. We do not believe that a non-legislated solution is achievable or enforceable. As a result, without a legislated solution, the existing tensions and uncertainty in the fire service community will continue, and the high potential for two-hatters to resign as a result of OPFFA constitutional enforcement activities could well result in significant public safety concerns arising. It is my understanding that such protection is not uncommon in most jurisdictions in Canada and in the United States.

“In closing, my office recognizes the importance of balancing interests where possible, but supports first and foremost the need to develop a legislated solution that clearly protects the interests of public safety. It is important that career firefighters who wish to serve as part-time or volunteer firefighters in their home communities are permitted to do so without fear of loss of employment.”

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to read those comments from the standing committee on justice by the fire marshal of Ontario of the day, Bernard Moyle, explaining why he supported my Bill 30.

I realize we're getting very close to the time. Maybe this is a good time to let you pause now and recess the House so that we can resume this debate later on. I still have about half of my time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'll keep going, then. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The whole point of all of that was to again remind the House of the importance of two-hatters in rural Ontario. I could have reiterated many of the points that I made in my second reading speech on Bill 30 in 2002, or my third reading speech on Bill 30 that I presented to this House, which took place, I believe, in December 2002. But I thought it was probably most helpful to take the words of the foremost expert in the fire service in the province of Ontario—the senior fire official in the province of Ontario of the day, the fire marshal—and allow his words to be brought into this debate today to indicate why we do need to support our two-hatter firefighters and ensure that they can continue.

Over the course of this debate there will be more questions, but again, if indeed this Bill 109 provides protection for two-hatter firefighters, that's a good thing for public safety in small-town Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and

I would have to commend the government. It has been 13 years since I introduced my bill, and it's pretty exciting if indeed the day has finally come when we are going to provide the legislative protection that the fire marshal argued was necessary in 2002 and that was encompassed in my Bill 30. If that day is finally here, then it's a good day for public safety in rural Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and welcome the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus to Queen's Park. I want to thank them for their breakfast and the conversation this morning, and again welcome them here and thank them for being here at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm really happy to introduce Adam Jeronimo, who is here from my constituency office in Pickering–Scarborough East. This is his first time to Queen's Park and first time to question period. He's attending some meetings and we're going to have lunch today. Welcome, Adam. Thanks for being here.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to congratulate this morning page, Sydney Groskleg, who is joined by her parents today, Jennifer and Darwin. They're here in the gallery this morning. Sydney is the third member of the Groskleg family to act as a page, following her sisters, Giselle and Abbigail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the member for Willowdale, I want to welcome Vibhas Bapat and Swati Bapat, who are the parents of our page captain, Sameer Bapat. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome three local wardens who were here for breakfast this morning with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus: Rick Phillips, who is the warden of Hastings county and the reeve of Tyendinaga township; Gord Schermerhorn, who is the mayor of Napanee and the warden of Lennox and Addington county; and Robert Quaiff, who is the mayor and warden of Prince Edward county. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think they're on their way here. I'd like to introduce members of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team: president Paul Beeston, general manager Alex Anthopoulos, and the entire team is scheduled to be here today. I'd like to introduce them and also congratulate them on winning the American east championship and entering the playoffs, and wishing them the best to win the World Series. I'm told they wear hats like that. I'm told that.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Far be it from me to tell the dean of the House it's not a point of order.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Please join me in welcoming page Grace Maili Sengfah's mother, Ja Kai Shwe, who is in the public gallery today. She is the mother of page Grace Maili Sengfah.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to introduce Frank Leone, Jan Freedman, Jim Abram and Louise Miller from the Aurora Seniors Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome all the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure to introduce—it's his last day here—page Krishaj Rajbhandari. His mother is here, Jasmine Rajbhandari, and his sister is here, Isha Rajbhandari, and a family friend, Norma. They're all sitting up in the public gallery this morning.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park today Warden Denis Doyle and Kelly Pender from my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

WEARING OF TORONTO BLUE JAYS PARAPHERNALIA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, I believe on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, a point of order, Speaker, of course: I believe we do have unanimous consent by all parties to allow members today to wear their Blue Jays jersey or hat in the House in recognition of the Blue Jays making the post-season for the first time in 22 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I introduce that unanimous consent, I would ask for an amendment that says, "Don't let Jim Bradley wear a hat."

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. Forget that amendment.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent to wear the Blue Jays paraphernalia. Do we agree? Thank you. Put it on.

I would also point out that we have a few Blue Jays fans up there already.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The government's 2014 budget made a spending commitment for infrastructure of \$130 billion. In that budget, the spending commitment was fully costed with no mention of the Hydro One fire sale. The 2015 budget made the same spending commitment of \$130 billion, but included the proceeds from the Hydro One fire sale.

What happened? How does this Premier justify the fire sale of Hydro One, saying it's for infrastructure when

there's not one iota of a difference between what they were spending in 2014 and what they're spending now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, go, Blue Jays.

Let me begin by saying to the Leader of the Opposition that we've always been clear that we needed to look at our assets, to leverage current assets in order to be able to invest in the assets that we need for now and for the future. If we don't invest in the roads and the bridges and the transit systems and the water systems and the schools and the hospitals around this province that we know are needed by communities, we're not going to be able to compete. We're not going to be as productive as we should be, and communities are not going to be able to thrive and businesses are not going to be able to expand.

Infrastructure is fundamental to our economic growth. It always has been. It has been neglected in the past. We are making the investments necessary in order to be able to go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: No one believes the spin that the Hydro One fire sale is going for infrastructure. In 2014, the Premier said that she would spend \$130 billion in her budget, and they laid out how they were going to pay for it. Now the Liberals claim the \$4 billion from the Hydro One fire sale is going to pay for infrastructure.

An editorial in the Ottawa Citizen reads, "A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset ... just to keep doing what we have been doing" before.

"The real answer, I suspect, is that" it "will enable the government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay" for their spending programs.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier admit the fire sale of Hydro One is just and entirely to pay for their own mismanagement?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, the assumption, in fact, explicitly stated in that question is that we are doing exactly what has been done by previous governments. That's not true. Previous governments didn't invest in infrastructure, and when we came into office in 2003, what the previous—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not getting things quiet for somebody to throw their jabs in.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When we came into office in 2003, the fact is that there was a lag, there was neglect in the investment in infrastructure that had been a hallmark of the previous government, including filling in the hole along Eglinton Avenue where there would have been a subway. We would have had a subway along Eglinton by now if that government hadn't filled—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: The \$130-billion commitment in 2015 wasn't new. It was fully costed in 2014. The only difference between the 2014 infrastructure commitment and the one in 2015 is the surprise fire sale of Hydro One. The Liberal budget is simply a shell game. Everyone in Ontario knows it's a shell game.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is just not true.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of the Treasury Board, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is: What is the money really going for? Is it going for eHealth? Is it going to make up for Ornge? Is it going for the gas plants? Are you doing this fire sale to pay for your own scandals and incompetence?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every time the Leader of the Opposition says the words “fire sale,” I think he's talking about the 407, because that's what that was.

We were always clear that in order to make the investments that we need to make, we had to look at current assets, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we asked Ed Clark to look at our current assets and to give us advice on how to leverage them to invest in new infrastructure. That was always part of our plan. We were very clear about it and that is what we're doing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing and the member from Renfrew, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the assets and the need to leverage assets from the time we put our plan in place. It was in our budget; it was in our election platform. We're moving forward so we can make the investments that are needed in this province.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This week the minister stood in the House and spoke of the importance of agriculture in the province, and I commend the minister for recognizing that during Ontario Agriculture Week. But in his capacity, the minister should be fighting for rural Ontario at the cabinet table, making rural voices heard. Instead, the minister has ignored the plea from 166 municipalities, the vast majority in rural Ontario, that have said unequivocally that the fire sale of Hydro One is a bad deal for rural Ontario. The minister knows this fire sale is a bad deal for rural Ontario. Mr. Speaker, when will the minister stand up for the people of rural Ontario

and tell his Premier why this is a bad deal for rural Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, thanks—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm still standing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The question from the Leader of the Opposition is like a fastball down the middle of the plate, and let me tell you why. I was a city councillor in Peterborough in 1998-99, when the government—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I went through what was called then the Who Does What exercise. Anybody who served on municipal council during that period of time knows exactly what it was. It was a “who got done in” exercise. That party over there downloaded 43% of all the roads and bridges in eastern Ontario. Shame on them for not funding that and dumping it down.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: First, the minister kept quiet on the neonic pesticides issue and now he sits silent on the Hydro One fire sale while rural municipalities are pleading for him to stand up for rural Ontario.

It's interesting that among the 166 municipalities that say this is a bad deal for Ontario are Peterborough and Peterborough county. In the past, the minister was on the record saying he would keep Hydro One in public hands. The minister knows that his own constituents and over 70% of residents in Ontario are against this bad deal.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question to the minister is, will he finally stand up for his constituents in Peterborough, listen to his city council and say this is a bad deal for rural Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The Leader of the Opposition just pitched another fastball down the middle of the plate. I'd like to report what the Leader of the Opposition said on May 5, 2015: “I generally believe that the private sector can do a better job than the public sector. I generally think market conditions would be helpful for a lot of government agencies.”

And then on May 15: “I obviously like market conditions. I know how the private sector runs like a business.”

Mr. Speaker, he should ask me another question, the third ball down the middle of the plate.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the minister: We know the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m actually trying to get the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, I’m trying to get the attention of them, and you’re not helping.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There’s three.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, no, don’t engage.

Please ask your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: We know the minister won’t stand up for rural Ontario on the neonic ban. We know the minister will not stand up for his own constituents in Peterborough, by virtue of the motion passed by Peterborough city council. But maybe he can support agriculture in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, second time.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I’m asking the Minister of Agriculture if he will support the incredible work by the member for Huron–Bruce, who is putting forward a motion to recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy, and introduce it into the high schools. Will the minister support this great motion today?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition just walked in the winning run this afternoon against the Texas Rangers with that question. The answer is simple: Yes.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I’m proud to be wearing my blue and white today to support the Blue Jays.

My question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario don’t want this Premier to sell off our public hydro system. They have been writing; they have been signing petitions; they have been demonstrating, Speaker, but this Premier has ignored them and has ignored their legitimate concerns.

She promised to consult, but so far she’s only consulting with wealthy investors. She promised to listen, but so far she’s only listening to her embedded banker, Speaker. This Premier doesn’t care what the people of Ontario think. Why is she ignoring Ontarians and plowing ahead

with the sell-off of Hydro One against the public’s wishes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows full well, what we have said is that we are going to broaden the ownership in Hydro One. I’m sure when she’s talking to folks in communities, she makes it clear that that is a portion of the electricity system in Ontario, that it’s part of the distribution system and the transmission system, and that it is a system that is already mixed in terms of private and public deliverers. I’m sure she makes that clear, Mr. Speaker.

I’m sure she also makes it clear that we said we were going to leverage existing assets in order to invest in the infrastructure assets that we know we need into the future, because that’s what this is about. It’s about the roads and the bridges, the water systems around the province, the transit that we know we need in order to be able to compete globally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I can tell you for sure, Speaker, is that the people of Ontario do darn well know what Hydro One is, and they don’t want it sold off.

The Premier thinks she knows better than Ontarians, though. Most Ontarians oppose the sell-off of Hydro One. Meanwhile, a significant majority of Ontarians also favour modest increases to the taxes of our largest corporations, Speaker. The government’s own report showed that by raising corporate tax rates by 1%, they could raise \$700 million a year. That’s almost double the annual—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —expenditure that they expect to make through their sell-off of Hydro One, Speaker.

Why is this Premier plowing ahead with this unnecessary sell-off against the will of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, as the leader of the third party knows, every municipal leader in this province, Mr. Speaker, is looking to the provincial government—and also to the federal government, quite frankly—for investments in infrastructure. They know that they need to be able to make those investments. They can’t do it on their own. They know they need a partner in the provincial government to invest in provincial infrastructure that links our communities and to work with municipalities to make those investments.

1050

The leader of the third party talks about tax increases. She knows that in our budget, we did increase taxes. She also knows that when she talks about a corporate tax hike, she’s not talking about it in the context of a competitive business environment because that doesn’t seem to be a concern of hers. She also knows that she has spent that corporate tax hike 50 times. She spent it on education; she spent it on social services; she spent it on infrastructure—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier knows that over 170 municipal leaders have said no to the sell-off of Hydro One. This Premier knows that our combined corporate tax rate here in the province of Ontario is lower than that of Alabama, and she should be ashamed of that, not proud of it.

The Premier is presenting the people of Ontario with a false choice, because the fact is that she had a choice. She could have chosen to ask the most profitable corporations to pay just a little bit more. This would allow us to build the transit and the infrastructure that this province so desperately needs. But instead, she is cynically insisting on selling off Hydro One.

When will the Premier do the right thing and put a stop to this wrong-headed privatization, just stop this direction, and make a better choice for the people of Ontario and the generations to come?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The NDP is presenting the people of Ontario with a mythical solution. The fact is, this is the kind of magical thinking that would not result in the building of transit, because every time there is a challenge put forward in terms of revenue that's needed, in terms of investment that's needed, whether it's in transit, whether it's in roads and bridges, whether it's in health care or whether it's in education, the leader of the third party trots out the same number and the same solution.

The reality is that under her lack of a—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: With her lack of a plan, Mr. Speaker, there would be no new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph, there would be no Highway 401 improvements in London and Highway 417 in Ottawa, and there would be no Maley Drive extension in Sudbury because you cannot do any of those things without the funding to make—

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every time this Premier needs money, she picks the pockets of everyday Ontarians and makes this society less fair in Ontario, Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. The Trans-Pacific Partnership has a lot of people very worried. This Premier has been happy to hurl attacks at Stephen Harper when it suits her federal leader's purposes, but on his far-reaching secret trade deal, she's suddenly excited by Harper's plans, despite the fact that the TPP could not only roll back environmental progress made under previous agreements, it could also restrict Internet freedom.

OpenMedia has said that the TPP "will criminalize our online activities, censor the web, and cost everyday users money."

The people of Ontario want to know: At what point will this Premier actually draw a line and say enough to the dangerous provisions in Harper's TPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows that there is a period of ratification now as the details of the plan are made clear. What I have said is that we have some concerns; we absolutely do have some concerns. We have some concerns about agriculture and what the implications of the agreement would mean. We have concerns about the auto parts sector. Obviously, the auto industry is extremely important to the people of Ontario, and we have some concerns about what the implications would be.

But there are also opportunities. If you look across the country, there are opportunities for industry to find new markets and to be able to expand.

We are taking a cautious approach, but we are not irresponsibly washing our hands of opportunities that may exist for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Economists warn that the TPP could drive away one quarter of Canada's auto manufacturing. Guess what, Speaker? That's mostly in Ontario. The fact that Stephen Harper is throwing a billion dollars at the auto sector shows very clearly that even he knows it will be bad for manufacturing. And Jim Balsillie, the founder of BlackBerry, is sounding alarm bells about the impact of the TPP on the tech sector.

The people of Ontario, of this province, deserve to know why their Premier is jumping on the bandwagon with her federal leader to back this bad trade deal. Why is the Premier of this province—of this province—willing to accept a deal that kills 20,000 jobs in Ontario's auto sector and threatens Ontario's burgeoning tech sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not jumping on a bandwagon. I'm not completely supportive. I have said that we are concerned about certain areas in the deal. We need to see the language. We need to understand exactly what the details are. We need to understand the implications for industry in Ontario.

But we also need to know where there are opportunities. This is an agreement that was forged for the whole country, and I understand that we are here in Ontario. It is my job to stand up for the people and the industries in this province, and I will do that. But we also have to understand that we're part of a federation, and we need to understand what the implications and the opportunities are for all provinces and territories across the country.

So I'm not jumping on a bandwagon. I'm saying: Let's look at it, let's figure out where the cautions are and let's figure out where the opportunities are.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier cannot have it both ways. She can't say one thing to the Empire Club and say something totally opposite in this Legislature.

The chorus of voices against the TPP is growing. Prominent US legislators and former Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton have now stated their opposition to the TPP, because it will unfairly benefit big US drug companies at the expense of patients, Speaker, and because it will push North American wages down even further.

Ontario families are already struggling with stagnant wages and cannot afford to be squeezed further. At what point will the Premier of this province stop going along with her federal leader and Stephen Harper in their race to the bottom and instead stand up for Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that saying that there are cautions that we have to be very clear about in this trade deal, understanding that there may be sectors like the auto sector, like the supply managed sector where we have to be very, very careful that there are supports in place—I think that is standing up for the people of Ontario. I also think it's standing up for the people of Ontario when, if there is an opportunity for us to strengthen our export capacity, to find markets that are going to help our businesses to grow—I think that's standing up for the people of Ontario as well.

The fact that the leader of the third party can't deal with that complexity is not the problem of the people of Ontario. It is complex. It is a complex global economy, and as soon as she discovers that, the better off we all are.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm expecting everyone to do that. When I stand, you stop.

New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. Last week, after the senseless violence that struck the Ottawa Valley, I asked the Attorney General just how many convicted offenders are released despite their refusal to sign probation orders. The Attorney General said she didn't know.

In January 2014, Anastasia Kuzyk went to the OPP because Mr. Borutski violated his probation order, broke into her home and violently beat her. Ms. Kuzyk said that she thought he was going to kill her. His violent past should have raised every conceivable red flag. Just nine months after Mr. Borutski was released on probation, Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton are dead, allegedly at his hands.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier failed on her commitment to combating domestic violence and take immediate action to ensure violent offenders are more closely monitored?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is going to want to comment in the supplementary. What I want to just say is that this was a horrible, horrible tragedy. When it happened, it was shocking to everyone involved. My

heart absolutely goes out to all of the families and, quite frankly, to all of the communities. It was just a terrible tragedy.

It highlights why it's so important that we all work together, whether it's on the select committee or the changes that we are going to be bringing forward to legislation to make sure that there are supports for victims, that there are more protections put in place for people who are dealing with sexual assault and violence and helping them to come forward.

As I say, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will respond in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It absolutely was a tragedy, and we could have tried to prevent it. This government has failed to protect these three innocent women from a dangerous repeat offender who refused to comply with any court-ordered restrictions. This government is now putting more women at risk with its decision to cut the length of the Partner Assault Response Program from 16 weeks to 12 weeks because there are more than 3,000 offenders who are on the wait-list.

Three years ago the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee compiled a list of risk factors for enhanced assessment and safety, factors that the government should have acted on to prevent the murders of Anastasia, Nathalie and Carol. Their families, at the very least, deserve an apology and an explanation. Will the Premier explain why she's failing to act on the province's own committee's report to prevent the victims of domestic violence?

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to echo the Premier and all members of this House. The kind of incident that took place a few weeks ago in Wilno is shocking and is unacceptable. We know that domestic violence is despicable and absolutely unacceptable anywhere in Ontario. Everyone has the right to feel safe in their home and in their community.

All police services in Ontario are required to have policies and procedures in place for managing domestic violence investigations. To support police services across the province, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has developed a domestic violence occurrences guideline, and police services in Ontario have designated a domestic violence coordinator to provide a consistent approach for responding to domestic violence incidents. Not to mention, we are putting emphasis on training through the Ontario Police College to make sure that we've got the appropriate training for our police officers to avoid domestic violence.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is for the Premier. Some 20,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs in the auto sector and manufacturing sectors are estimated to be at risk from the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership trade

agreement that the leader of the Liberal Party plans on waiting and seeing about. But let me localize this for you: In my community of Windsor and Essex county, that's as many as 3,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, a community that is already reeling from the highest unemployment rate in Canada, one that has seen the exodus of good-paying manufacturing jobs to the lowest-wage jurisdictions on the planet over the last 10 years. Is the Premier prepared to tell the people of my community of Windsor and Essex county that she will indeed wait and see what happens with the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was no waiting and seeing. We had the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs go to Atlanta, where the deal was being finalized, to express concerns, to have a meeting with the federal minister, because, as the member knows, provinces and territories were not included by the federal government in the discussions; they weren't consulted with. We didn't have any idea of where they were going. We didn't have information about what the issues were going to be at the table. So we had to insert ourselves into the process, which is why the minister went to Atlanta.

We are not being passive in this in any way, nor are we being passive in terms of supporting our industries. We are very, very actively engaged with businesses across the province to work with them so that they can thrive. Part of that, Mr. Speaker, to go back to the question by his leader, is that we're investing in infrastructure that's needed by communities all across—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier has repeatedly said that she doesn't know what to expect from the TPP trade agreement. But she can't expect the people of Windsor and Essex county, with a 9.5% unemployment rate, to just "wait and see."

Stephen Harper said, in September, that the auto industry wouldn't like what was in the TPP trade agreement. That's why he's bracing for this impact with money announcements.

At what point will the Premier admit that she has absolutely no idea how to help the people of Windsor and Essex county withstand another hit from the expected TPP trade agreement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in every answer that I've given on this agreement, we have a concern about the auto sector, there's no doubt about that; we have been very clear. But the deal has been negotiated by the federal government. The deal has been negotiated without consultation with the Premiers of the provinces and the territories.

It is my responsibility to make sure that we put forward the cautions and that we make sure that the federal government understands that we are at risk in terms of a number of our sectors. Beyond that, it is very important, where there are opportunities for our industries to grow, that we take advantage of those opportunities.

We have to work with the federal government, which has negotiated this deal, to make sure that both those things happen: the protections and the opportunities.

YOUTH SERVICES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last Wednesday I picked up the Toronto Star and read about a number of changes that will benefit children and youth in care. I understand that these changes are making it easier to connect these vulnerable young people with a more permanent living situation and, hopefully, a place to call home. In an editorial this weekend, the Star applauded these changes in saying, "It's not just the right thing for the province to give these kids a helping hand. It's a fiscally prudent move that will make a big difference in their lives as they become adults."

In my community of Kingston and the Islands, the wonderful dedicated staff and volunteers at Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington work so hard to provide safe and nurturing environments for more than 350 young people under their care. I know that they would also be interested in learning more about these changes.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House on the important changes she announced last week?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for taking such an active interest in what's going on in terms of adoption in Ontario. It's an excellent question.

We made these changes because we recognize that there's a need to do more to support permanency in our child welfare system. The research is very, very clear: Children experience better outcomes when they have a stable and permanent living situation. That's why we're making these changes to strengthen the adoption system so more children and youth can find forever families.

Among the specific steps we're taking are measures to make it easier for traditionally harder-to-place children to be adopted. We're supporting families to adopt older children and we're expanding eligibility for our adoption subsidies so that more children can be connected with their forever families. This is great news for children in care in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to thank the minister for the update and for this exciting news.

I'm glad that more children in care will be connected with a permanent and stable living situation and benefit from the stability and care of a family. I greatly admire the foster parents who strive to make a positive difference in the lives of so many deserving children and youth. I know that sometimes it can be a hard adjustment, as some children and youth are coping with emotional and/or behavioural challenges. That is one reason why proper stability, support and, of course, friendship and affection are so important. I am proud that our government is supporting families in this way. I'm also glad to read on Twitter that these are changes that the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth supports.

Can the minister please explain how the changes she announced will help children focus on their education?

1110

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: There are a number of changes in the announcement from last week that we're all very proud of, but I want to talk about children in care who are not progressing on the same time line for finishing high school as children who live with families, Speaker. I think we all agree it's our responsibility to ensure these young people are given every opportunity to succeed, and quite often that happens and starts with a high school diploma. So last week we announced funding that allows crown wards to stay with their foster families past the age of 18 while they finish school. This means they'll be able to maintain the stability necessary to finish high school without disruption to their home environment.

We heard from youth and we heard from the child and youth advocate that this was the right thing to do, and we absolutely agree. It's the right thing for our children and youth, and we're very, very proud to be doing this.

DOCTORS' FEES

Mrs. Gila Martow: Of course, go, Jays, go. We're all very excited for this afternoon.

My question is directed to the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, some of us may recall, way back in the year 2000, the negotiation of doctor compensation when the Ontario government agreed to cover medical liability protection costs in exchange for direct remuneration. This was considered a barter system, paying the soaring malpractice insurance costs in exchange for less taxpayer money to doctors.

With this government's repeated cuts to doctors' service fees, coupled with the Liberal government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, is this government prepared to cover the high pension costs for medical staff in doctors' offices, as you did for medical liability protection costs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It has many parts to it. I'm proud that as part of our past agreements with the OMA we continue to reimburse them for a portion of their liability insurance. I think that's something—in fact, it goes all the way back to the mid-1980s and something that every government since then has supported.

I'm not sure exactly where the member opposite is trying to go. Our physicians in this province—and I say this with pride, being one of them—are the best-paid in Canada, as they should be. We have some of the brightest minds, the best physicians and experts providing the highest quality of health care to this province, and that's as it should be.

We're obviously in a difficult financial time. We've asked our doctors to take a modest reduction in the fees that we provide for the services they provide to Ontarians. But they are the best-paid in this country, probably in North America, possibly beyond. That will remain as such.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Minister of Health: I would just say that I think that a lot of doctors would disagree with some of your comments.

The minister claims that there will be no new money available to pay our doctors. This Liberal government expects the total amount paid to all our doctors collectively to remain the same year after year, with no extra money to account for our increasing population, our aging population, up-to-date medical treatments or the rising costs of running a clinic.

We certainly do not hear, for example, the Minister of Education speak in these terms. Imagine a neighbourhood school with a specific budget for teacher salaries. Now imagine the same school accepting 60 more students and requiring two new teachers. No one would consider it reasonable to require all the teachers at the school to give up a portion of their salaries to fund the two new teachers. Why, then, does the Minister of Health expect doctors to give up a portion of their fees?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say as well that the average compensation for our doctors has gone up by 60% since we took office. In fact, our budget, the envelope available for physicians, isn't remaining the same. It's going up by 1.25% this year; it's going up by 1.25% next year. It is increasing.

But I have to say to the member opposite that I would have hoped she'd also reference our other health care professionals. Our PSWs: We've increased their wages. Our nurse practitioners: We have substantial issues in recruitment and retention of our nurse practitioners and other health care professionals. We have to provide more funds, as we've committed to do, to home care; to mental health services, as well.

So we're asking our doctors, in the face of a 60% increase, far in excess of any health care professional, to actually take a pause, a modest reduction, so we can attend to those other priorities.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Last November, the Liberal caucus, including the Minister of Education, voted to support the NDP's motion calling for the province to work with the federal government to provide low-cost child care spaces. However, after it was clear that the NDP was the only willing federal partner ready to support \$15-a-day child care, the Premier decided to put partisan Liberal interests—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The Premier decided to put partisan Liberal interests ahead of the needs of Ontario families.

I wrote to the Premier in August asking whether she intended to honour or break the commitment her government made last year. She has not answered, so I ask again: Will the Premier honour or break her govern-

ment's commitment to ensure that new child care spaces in Ontario will cost no more than \$15 a day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the steady stream of questions from the Mulcair campaign. It's very encouraging. I would say to the member that it is not at all clear what a Mulcair plan for child care would actually cost the province of Ontario.

Of course, we have made significant investments in child care and will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. Child care funding has increased in Ontario from \$532.4 million to over \$1 billion. That's a 90% increase.

We are committed to child care. We understand how important it is, and we will continue to remain committed to child care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It sounds to me like the Premier is not willing to honour her commitment.

My question is to the Minister of Education. In order to sustain child care spaces, you need good neighbourhood schools. Less than a week ago, the government re-announced a promise to provide child care that is close to home, meaning it would be in schools. But since 2011, the minister has forced the closure of at least 88 schools across the province. Five schools in Windsor-Essex are currently at risk of immediate closure.

How can the minister promise child care spaces in schools when she is actively forcing the closure of good community schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I was very pleased last week to announce the beginning of a program for investment in about 4,000 new child care spaces. We did the first 13 of those child cares. What the member opposite is missing is that in some cases what we are doing is actually creating the opportunity to take child care that was in the community and move it to a school, or take child care that was previously located in one school and build it in a new school. That's something that we intend to continue doing.

Some of those spaces are for four- and five-year-olds' before- and after-care. The particular group of spaces we announced last week are actually for preschoolers. In fact, we announced almost 800 new spaces just last week alone.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Labour.

Women and men should be on equal footing in today's society. Earlier this week, our Premier spoke about a group of inspiring Canadians, the Famous Five, who tirelessly advocated for women's rights.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to women's equality by helping women get better access to the workforce through major investments in education, training programs, full-day kindergarten, child care, and also through the work of the Pay Equity Commission, the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Human

Rights Commission. These independent provincial agencies help to increase the economic security of women and eliminate systemic barriers.

However, Mr. Speaker, each day in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, I hear the same issue: There's a wage gap between genders that unfairly disadvantages women in our province.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is being done to ensure that Ontario moves forward towards eliminating the wage gap?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for this very important question on a very important issue.

Speaker, the sad fact is, women on average in Ontario do not earn as much as men, and that needs to change. As the member knows, Minister MacCharles and I previously announced our Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee. The panel is made up of two external advisers: Linda Davis, the past president of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario; and Dr. Parbudyal Singh, who is a leading expert in human resource management and in labour relations. And we've got the Pay Equity Commissioner for Ontario, Emanuela Heynick, and Nancy Austin from my own ministry.

1120

The member's question could not have come at a better time. Today we're releasing our consultation paper, announcing the kickoff on October 26 right across Ontario. Speaker, this is a very important issue whose time has come. We're committed to developing a strategy that's going to close the wage gap between men and women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I'm happy the consultation will begin shortly, and I'm looking forward to the recommendations that will be put forward during this process.

I also know this is a complex issue caused by many different factors. I know that all women across economic spectrums are affected by the wage gap, but the gap is more pronounced for women who are minorities, aboriginals, newcomers or living with disabilities.

Last Saturday, I hosted a health and government fair in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. I heard a number of issues from new Canadians about the wage gap issue. The existence of a gender wage gap is indicative of barriers facing women that prevent them from making a full contribution to the provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House of the goals of this steering committee and the steps it would take to achieve these goals?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member again for that excellent question.

Our goal, clearly, is to increase fairness for women in Ontario by closing the gender wage gap. To help us do that, the consultations are going to examine ways that government, business, labour, other organizations and even individuals can work together to identify oppor-

tunities, remove the barriers and close that gender wage gap. It's going to examine the role of women at work, in their families and in their communities, and how this impacts on the gap.

Following the consultations, the committee will be responsible for providing me, along with the minister responsible for women's issues, with recommendations that can assist us in achieving the goal we all have of closing the gender wage gap in Ontario.

I look forward to seeing the recommendations that come back from this committee and taking the next step necessary to make Ontario a fairer province. As I said earlier, this is an issue whose time has come. We aim to deal with it.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Attorney General, through the Speaker. Muskoka Victim Services usage is growing exponentially. Over the past five years alone, the yearly caseload jumped from 185 to 822 individuals. That's a 444% increase.

This local organization provides critical immediate support for individuals and families faced with challenges following crime or tragic events. They do tremendous work.

Because of the changes the Liberal government made to the funding model, Muskoka Victim Services is being forced to do more with less. A funding cut of 10% has left the organization scrambling to find ways to effectively serve their clients. Speaker, will the minister explain why the government cut funding to Muskoka Victim Services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's really a good question, because in the past there was no consistency with these programs. A few years ago, we did review the program. We did analyze it, and we are now attributing the money to the request for service.

But we know that in rural communities and in the north, the population is not there, but they need the service. So we have a special addition in the envelope for rural and northern communities. It's being reviewed every year. If there is an increase, then the envelope is readjusted.

I will say to the member: Please speak to me, and I will give more details with the information in hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again through the Speaker to the Attorney General: As the trend shows, demand is increasing for local services provided for victims. With the hard work of the organization and over 50 volunteers, they are doing their best to meet the increasing demand. Muskoka Victim Services has had to resort to producing a fundraising video to help make up their budget shortfall.

Speaker, shouldn't increasing access to victim services be a priority for the Liberal government, regardless of where in Ontario a person chooses to live?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Of course, victim services is a very, very important program and the support for those who need the service. That is why, in 2015, we created Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario. As I said in my previous answer, we are not reducing the overall envelope. Instead, we are redistributing the funding to meet service demand. Under the new funding model, 28 of the 47 agencies that deliver these programs received an increase. Again, these services are revised regularly, and if there is an increase in demand, the envelope will be increased.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last year, my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain raised the issue of a young man, Cameron Laflamme, who has autism and requires intensive one-on-one care and the supports provided through a day program. The issue then was that he was about to age out of school and his mother, needing to work full-time, couldn't afford to put him into a day program. Happily, funding was provided and Cameron received the care he needed and his mum was able to continue to work. But now the family has learned that the funds available are going to run out this November and will not cover the full annual cost of her son's day program after all.

What exactly does the Premier expect this family to do if the funds aren't available?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the important question. As I do with the critic for children and youth services from your party, I'm always happy to discuss cases with her to the extent I can. I can't get into specifics of a case here, of course, but I think we work very well in terms of identifying issues in her riding and other ridings, and our regional office often reaches out to the families who may need additional support.

I know very well that families caring for young people with autism face very unique challenges, and we are very determined, as a government, to make further progress for these children and their families. That's why our government invests nearly \$190 million annually in autism services. That's an increase of more than 300% since 2003. But we know there's more to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt that this family was grateful that the work of the member from Hamilton Mountain with this minister helped resolve this case several months ago, but the problem is that this young man, Cameron Laflamme, has not been cured of autism. He still has autism and still needs the program. They're in crisis right now. They can't wait for any other solution. This young man has aged out of school. He's been placed in a day program that works, where he actually gets the care he needs.

The solution is clear—in fact, the minister helped find it. But not only are the Liberals pulling the rug out from

under Cameron now, several months later, but they're failing thousands of families just like his. Cameron's mom can't quit her job in order to provide full-time support for him while waiting years for funding to come through.

When are this government and this Premier going to commit to helping Cameron's family, and others like them, in a permanent way that helps them over time, not just for a small window?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Just as my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said, in individual cases, of course, we would welcome further information. I'm not aware of this particular situation, but if the individual is now an adult, the individual and the family need to consult with their local developmental service organization.

I would certainly urge the member to consult with my ministry. We are dedicated to ensuring that people have appropriate services. We acknowledge the great efforts that families and caregivers do play—the role they play in their commitment to the individual they are caring for. This is precisely why, in our budget, we did increase the budget for developmental services in this province.

1130

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, infertility is a very serious medical issue that affects about one in six families here in Ontario. All different types of families want to know the joy of bringing a child into the world, but for some, they're not able to do so easily. Going through infertility treatments can be extremely trying on people physically, emotionally and financially. I can tell you that I have a family member who knows this all too well.

There have been a number of constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre who have come to see me to ask how our government is supporting Ontarians who are facing these challenges as they try to conceive. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what our government is doing to support people who do want to grow their families and who might be eligible for these services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for this important question. It's an important question for thousands and thousands of Ontarians. She's absolutely right that the implications of infertility can be incredibly emotionally painful. Unless you've experienced it personally, you can't even begin to fathom the impact it can have on your life and that of your family.

Until recently, access to fertility services has not been possible for many families because of the cost involved. But last week I was extremely proud to announce that our government is expanding access for all Ontarians, regardless of sex or gender, sexual orientation or family status.

Families come in all shapes and sizes in this province, Mr. Speaker. This program will begin in December of this year.

For women needing access to in vitro fertilization, our publicly funded program will continue to the cost of one cycle of IVF for all women under the age of 43.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I also want to add that family really is a gift. Every day I'm very proud of my husband and my three awesome kids. Children are the future in this province and in our country, and everyone deserves a chance at parenthood. I know that my constituents in Kitchener Centre are going to be very encouraged to hear about this news that, as of December, our government is going to be expanding access to all Ontarians who are struggling with infertility.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: What are we doing to ensure that fertility services are not only accessible and equitable, but are also safe?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, patient safety remains my number one priority as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario will be working—the government will be working—with the College of Physicians and Surgeons in order to provide stronger quality and safety oversight in the infertility sector.

Our government is also working to improve safety and accessibility by expanding the definition of what one cycle of IVF is. It means that Ontario is going to contribute to the cost of one egg retrieval and also cover the transfer of all viable embryos one at a time, what's known as single embryo transfer. By expanding this definition, patients get more chances to conceive and are more likely to have a safe, healthy pregnancy and delivery. In fact, single embryo transfer will dramatically reduce the chance of having multiple births, multiple pregnancies, and reduce the morbidity, risks and costs associated with that.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mr. Speaker, according to Matthews House Hospice in my riding, the organization's unfunded four beds hosted 90 patients last year, affording them a dignified death. This year that number sits at 41 clients so far. In addition, its community hospice service supported 487 individuals last year, and to date the organization has already been there for 380 clients.

The government has promised to fund 20 new hospices. They promised this in the 2014 budget. But Matthews House still isn't funded and we're nearing the end of 2015. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House when the government will step up and fully fund Matthews House Hospice in Alliston?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I agree with the member opposite that, by reputation, Matthews House does an extraordin-

ary job for individuals and families in extremely trying, emotionally difficult circumstances. That's why this government has made a commitment, as he mentioned, to fund an additional 20 new hospices across Ontario.

I've asked my parliamentary assistant, John Fraser—sorry, the member for Ottawa South—to actually lead a process where he's developing a palliative care strategy, renewing our end-of-life strategy. We were the first government, in 2005, to actually bring in an end-of-life strategy and attached more than \$100 million to that contribution. We were the first government in this province to actually fund hospices in the first place. We've made that commitment. Matthews House has a great reputation. The ministry is working directly with Matthews, as well as with our LHIN, on this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: I thank the minister for that answer and I also want to take the opportunity to thank the honourable member for Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser, your parliamentary assistant, for touring Matthews House Hospice just recently. That was very good of him to meet with the staff and volunteers.

But I remind you that other hospices in the area—for the south end of Simcoe county the only hospice we have available is a couple of beds in Richmond Hill.

When you see numbers like 80 or 90 clients having a dignified death at Matthews House each year, year after year—you didn't have to pay for any of the bricks and mortar. You didn't pay for any of the overhead so far. You are paying for a couple of PSWs through home care. It's a good deal. They've diverted at least 60 people from dying in the local hospital, our very small Alliston Stevenson Memorial Hospital. It's a fraction of the cost to spend your last days in palliative care, in great care, with the volunteers and staff at the local hospice rather than the hospital.

So, Minister, I ask you again: When can you announce that you're going to fund Matthews House Hospice in Alliston?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As the member opposite has alluded to, I know there are a tremendous number of volunteers as well as the staff who work at the hospital who are doing an incredible job, day in and day out, for the individuals through Matthews House, the hospice that the member opposite is referring to.

We've made a commitment to fund 20 more hospices. We stand by that commitment. I think the member opposite would appreciate, as we had in 2005 with our end-of-life strategy, that we're taking a very principled and co-ordinated approach to this across the province to identify those hospices, like Matthews House, that are deserving of the funding in this new commitment.

I would request that both Matthews as well as the member opposite give my parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa South, that modest amount of time remaining for him to be able to consult. He mentioned that my PA had visited Matthews House, but give him that time to do the appropriate work so we can do this in a co-ordinated, proper fashion.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to add my own “go, Jays, go,” but I would also have to make an announcement that I'm saddened. This is the last day for our pages. I would like to offer, on behalf of all of us, our gratitude to this wonderful group of pages who have served us well.

Applause.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I wonder: Is it in order in this House for one member to take pictures of other members while they're in this House? I thought you made it very clear that we are not to use camera devices to take pictures of members while they're in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is indeed mentioning a protocol and a convention that is not to be done. I have spoken about this before: that all devices are not to be used for anything else other than their personal use, and quietly and unassumingly. I would anticipate that all members are honourable in that way, that they would not use that for any purpose other than what has been agreed upon.

I would also like to take a moment to point out to you that, regrettably—and I say this with all concern—that if tweeting is going to be taking place about issues that happen in this House, I highly recommend that it be accurate if it's going to happen. I would recommend against it.

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

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They're making their way into the chamber as we speak, but I'd like to welcome to the House today: president of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture, Pat Jilesen; president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Don McCabe; the executive director of Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., Colleen Smith; Sarah Baird, who holds down the fort in my Blyth constituency office, and her husband, Ron Baird.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have two guests here from the great riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. I have David Heimlich here and Jon Telch, who are part of the Nation Leagues.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I ask all members to join me in recognizing October 5 to 11 as National Family Week.

Families are the heart and soul of our communities across the province. If you think of your victories—in life, in business and, indeed, in politics—many of us appreciate and acknowledge the important roles our mothers and fathers have played in our successes. I know for me, I am most proud of the fact that I am a mom.

The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs says that families are the natural place for children to grow and reach their potential.

I want to thank the many organizations, staff and volunteers who support families across Ontario, including the Caledon Parent-Child Centre, the Dufferin Early Years Centre and the Peel Family Education Centre.

Every child deserves to be part of a loving family. They are, first and foremost, the most important support system for the majority of children. They are there to help guide a child through the good and bad times of life, and to help each child reach their full potential through instilling values that will guide them throughout their lives.

Families are also the first opportunity for children to interact with others, and help instill the necessary social skills that are needed through life.

A family is a community within a community that teaches each and every one of us the importance of nurturing our community. Family is also a place where everyone can learn something from one another; whether you are a parent, an uncle, an aunt, a brother, a sister or a grandparent, we all learn from each other.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving this weekend, I hope everybody will have an opportunity to spend time with their loved ones and be thankful for your family.

HEALTHY EATING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Recognizing that inaccessible and unaffordable healthy food in the North is a key contributing factor to higher rates of chronic diseases and food insecurity, the government of Manitoba just announced a pilot program to reduce the high costs of healthy food staples in 10 remote First Nation and northern communities. AFFIRM, Affordable Food in Remote Manitoba, is a retail subsidy program designed to help reduce shipping costs over and above the paltry subsidy offered by Nutrition North Canada.

Presently, of the 25 Far North communities in Kenora–Rainy River alone, only 11 communities receive some form of subsidy from Nutrition North Canada, with most receiving a meagre five-cents-a-kilogram reduction in shipping costs, leaving healthy foods out of reach for northerners.

But rather than point the finger at the federal government and wait for it to fix the problem, Premier Selinger took a leadership role and created a program to help northern Manitobans.

I'm proud of the work that New Democrats are doing to help improve health outcomes for northerners in other provinces and believe more can be done by this Liberal government to look after northern Ontarians.

I am once again calling on Premier Wynne to develop a strategy to help northerners regardless of what the federal government does or does not do. It is incumbent upon our provincial government to step up and look after all of our citizens within our borders. Other provinces are leading by example and showing that it should and can be done.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Halton's kickoff to Ontario Agriculture Week. The event was held at Country Heritage Park, one of our region's hidden gems, and we were delighted to have the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Jeff Leal, with us.

The event, entitled Future of Food and Farming Forum 2041, brought agriculture business leaders, stakeholders and government officials together to discuss trends that will dramatically transform our food and farming landscape.

It was an important event for our community, not just because it helped kick off agri-week, but because the agricultural sector plays an invaluable role in Halton. It is one of the pillars of our economy, providing stable, meaningful employment for workers, and it is a celebrated foundation of our region's history and development.

At Country Heritage Park, they even offer educational field trips for students in grades K to 8 to come and learn about various agricultural practices, histories and the importance of farming.

The food and farming forum was a chance to bring key people together to discuss important issues and celebrate the role that agriculture plays in our region. We are proud of our heritage, and I'm pleased that, through actions like Agriculture Week, this province is reminded of the importance that agriculture plays in our lives.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I rise to draw attention to a motion that was recently adopted by the town of Innisfil, in my riding of York–Simcoe.

The town of Innisfil has expressed its concern regarding the rising electricity rates and the impact this has on Ontario's manufacturing sector, agricultural sector, tourism, and most of all, families. The town of Innisfil endorsed this motion, which was brought forward by the town of New Tecumseth and the township of North Stormont.

Voters in Ontario are worried about the Liberal fire sale of Hydro One that will result in increases to their already-too-high hydro bills, making Ontario a more and more unaffordable place to live, work and raise a family. Ontario's ever-rising electricity rates hinder the ability of businesses to compete on a level playing field with other jurisdictions, and therefore kill jobs.

Ontario has among the highest electricity rates in North America. If that is not enough, rates are expected

to rise 42% between 2013 and 2018. The financial burden this will continue to place on seniors, families and businesses cannot be overstated.

Voters in Ontario know that selling Hydro One is a short-sighted move. It is a shame that this Premier is moving forward without listening to the thousands—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further members' statements?

DO GOOD DIVAS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There's a small fundraising group in Windsor and Essex county called the Do Good Divas. They've been raising money for local health care initiatives for the past nine years. The Do Good Divas have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the local hospitals, our regional cancer care centre and even the Jumpstart program, which provides a nutritional breakfast for our school kids.

The Canada South Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals has just named the Do Good Divas as this year's outstanding philanthropic group. They'll be honoured at an awards luncheon on November 5.

The Divas host an annual fundraiser called Diva Delights: A Girls' Night Out in Handbag Heaven. One thousand women come out to support this unique event, which features purses donated by celebrities, designers, retailers and generous individuals. There's a silent auction of more than 300 handbags, as well as a live auction of celebrity items. This year's event is on October 29, at the Caboto Club in Windsor. The highlight will be autographed handbags from Canadian recording artist Diana Krall, CTV's Marilyn Denis, Canadian Olympic medallist Clara Hughes, and Nashville star Carrie Underwood.

Once again, Bill Walker, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, will be on hand as the auctioneer of these celebrity handbag donations. I'll be the MC, along with Jim Crichton, the local news anchor at our CTV station.

Speaker, allow me to congratulate all of the Do Good Divas. They are a group of about 40 active volunteers, and a few Diva dudes as well. Yes, Speaker, I am a Diva dude. My wife, Gail Simko, is the founder and president of the Do Good Divas. She and Lucy Fanson, Vicki Granger and Lindsay Lovecky make up the executive. Together they are doing good deeds for the health of our community.

Keep up the good work and congratulations on being named the philanthropic group of the year. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome, dude.

1310

AURORA SENIORS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate this opportunity to tell the House about an important milestone in my riding of Newmarket-Aurora. It was in the early 1960s when

the women of Beta Sigma Phi sorority founded the Aurora Seniors Association. Back then, 75 seniors were members. Today more than 1,400 seniors are active members of the association.

I'm biased, but I think it is the best seniors' centre in Ontario, certainly in Canada. I will proudly admit that having reached a certain age myself I was able to join the association, and I have been warmly welcomed and enjoy Wednesday lunches. One day I look forward to using the well-equipped woodworking shop.

Yes, I know that it is shocking that I have reached a certain age, but I'm happy to say I'm there.

Ms. Soo Wong: What age is that?

Mr. Chris Ballard: The age? No, I'm not going to tell you my age.

Speaker, on Sunday, September 20, the Aurora Seniors Association celebrated the 10th anniversary of its new home. The Aurora Seniors Association just isn't an inward-looking group; it is also active in fundraising for groups like food banks, CHATS, Operation Smile and the Children's Wish Foundation. In fact, last year the volunteers prepared over 150 holiday gift baskets for the less fortunate.

I'd like to thank the past and current dedicated board members of the Aurora Seniors Association and the town of Aurora for its leadership and continued support. Thank you to everyone who makes that centre such a success.

PANDAS/PANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I stand today to help raise awareness for a very important health issue in our province. Pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder associated with streptococcus, known by the acronym PANDAS, and pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome, also known as PANS, are serious illnesses that are affecting the lives of young children across Ontario.

The PANDAS/PANS term refers to the sudden onset of obsessive-compulsive disorder, tics, anxiety, depression, irritability and regressive behaviour in children that cannot be explained by any other neurological or medical disorder, but that often occur following a strep infection.

Unfortunately, PANDAS/PANS is often misdiagnosed and untreated due to the lack of awareness both by the public and the medical community itself. The treatments for PANDAS/PANS vary by the needs of the child, but they do exist and may be as common as antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications, but the condition must first be diagnosed correctly.

It is imperative that there be greater public awareness of this serious children's health issue, and more must be done to increase support for families dealing with the challenges of PANDAS and PANS at the local, provincial and national level.

October 9th is the international day of awareness for the illnesses of PANDAS/PANS, and I encourage all members of this Legislature to take time tomorrow to learn more about PANDAS/PANS and its impact in their

communities. Please visit www.pandaspanontario.org for more information on this important issue.

NATION LEAGUES

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I would like to recognize my constituent David Heimlich, who is in the Legislature today. He is here with his friend Jon Telch. David is a young entrepreneur, who is the founder and president of Nation Leagues. Nation Leagues operates recreational sports leagues all across the Toronto area and caters to people of all ages. One of the favourite sports that they play in this league is dodge ball.

Particularly, David is committed to ensuring that working professionals with hectic schedules have a fun and easily accessible means of playing sports, and engaging in healthy activity, while at the same time, supporting local charitable causes.

David is consistently organizing charitable sports tournaments for adults. Unique to other charitable tournaments, Nation Leagues encourages teams to select their own charity of choice. The winners of Nation Leagues tournaments, rather than receiving awards, see the tournament proceeds go to the charity of their choosing. Nation Leagues is proud to have partnered with and supported dozens of charities.

David and Nation Leagues wanted even more to benefit communities through sport. As a result, David has begun plans to run after-school programs in our schools, and it is a priority for David, basically, to give youth a chance to be healthy and at the same time raise some money for charity.

Perhaps we should arrange a dodge ball game between the government and the two opposition parties. There's the challenge, Mr. Speaker.

TASTE OF STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: Tonight is the final dinner serving for the sixth annual Taste of Streetsville fine dining promotion and fundraiser for Trillium Health Partners. Hosted by the Streetsville BIA, the Taste of Streetsville ran from September 10 through to tonight, October 8. Diners enjoyed a three-course, fixed-price menu for just \$30.

A dozen of our local restaurants—Andiamo, Cagneys, Cantina Mexicana, Cuchulainn's Irish Pub, Enzo's, Jing Thai, the Franklin House, Giorgio's, Goodfellas, Graydon Bar and Grill, Mondello Ristorante and Saucy—laid out their best to thank regular patrons, show their fare to new diners and raise money for our hospital.

Proceeds from every meal during the annual Taste of Streetsville are donated to the redevelopment of the emergency department at Credit Valley Hospital. I toured the emergency department this past summer to personally see the need for redesigned space, to maximize and better manage patient flow and to create separate, specialized treatment areas for pediatrics and seniors.

It's all over Thursday, October 8. There is still a night to enjoy the world's finest food in the heart of historic Streetsville.

Thank you to our local restaurateurs for your help with the hospital emergency department and for your best dishes once again this year.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT

DE LA JUSTICE

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Monsieur le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice, et je propose son adoption.

Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC

CHARACTERISTICS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LE CODE

DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

(CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉTIQUES)

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to genetic characteristics / Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux caractéristiques génétiques.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I've introduced this bill before.

In Canada, Mr. Speaker, including Ontario, it is possible to be denied a job or insurance because of the genetic characteristics of your parents. Therefore, this bill would call for the amending of the Ontario Human Rights Code to prohibit this practice of denying people insurance and denying people employment because of who their parents were.

1320

PETITIONS

STUDENT SAFETY

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to Jacob to bring down.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on; and

"Whereas the federal government does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living; and

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

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

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I fully support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Duha.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, in recognition that people are suffering from, in addition to mental illnesses, the sickness of isolation, and to address this more action must be taken, including:

"—significant increase to provincial funding of mental health and addictions (parity with funding of treatment of physical disorders);

"—integrated treatment of addictions (at regular doctors' offices and pharmacies);

"—subsidized integration of people with mental disabilities into the workplace (in cases of and in recognition of less than 100% productivity);

"—disability insurance to not be cut off when people on disability take part-time jobs as a means of gradual reintegration into the workplace;

"—disability insurance to not be cut off when people on disability take university or college courses;

"—integration of psychotherapy under OHIP;

"—a meaningful code of ethics for psychologists that refers to content of talk (e.g. prohibits offensive language);

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to do more to support those dealing with mental illnesses and isolation by taking immediate action on the above points."

I agree with this petition and I will send it to the Clerks with Siena.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have hundreds of signatures here.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page David to bring down to the Clerks.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Gabriel from my riding of Davenport.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I fully support it and will send it with page Nuh.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J’ai une pétition adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Élimination des microbilles des produits cosmétiques.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l’envoie avec page Jaleelah.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Cindy Forster: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

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

“We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

I support this petition. I’ll send it to you with the page from my riding, Alex Wang.

WATER FLUORIDATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Laura to bring down.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a “Demonstrate Integrity” petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, has completed his investigation in Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr.’s actions prior to the Sudbury by-election; and

“Whereas Mr. Essensa’s investigation concluded that he is ‘of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act’; and

“Whereas ‘no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery’; and

“Whereas no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of their office to the Attorney General; and

“Whereas the actions of the staff in Office of the Premier and Liberal insiders have brought dishonour to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario;

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

“To request Premier Wynne demand the temporary resignation of Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr. until the allegations are resolved.”

Obviously, Gerry Loughheed Jr. has stepped down, so that’s half of it right there.

I’m happy to sign my name and give it to page Anna.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “Action needed for Alzheimer’s patients and their families.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia are seniors;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

“Whereas Ontario’s strategy for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.”

I fully agree. I will sign my name and give it to Krishaj to bring up to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Harinder Malhi: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I sign my name to this petition and I give it to page Jacob.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions is expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D’INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

Mr. Walker moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections à l’égard de la publicité électorale de tiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to open debate on Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising. If you are a voter in Ontario who believes in free speech, a level playing field and an open and transparent political process, I’m confident that you will welcome what you are about to hear.

I’d like to begin today by telling you that I alongside my PC caucus colleagues have a collective desire to see more citizen participation in democracy. We believe that elections must be fair, where everyone gets a fair shot. This is our commitment. But Ontario’s election laws offer no such guarantee today. What we see today is that the rules are not working very well.

The principle of fairness is paramount and fundamental to engaging everyone in our democratic process. As such, my party has been raising this issue of fairness for

years. We previously tabled a bill in this House, Bill 101, to provide a guarantee that everyone plays by the same rules, and that anyone, regardless of their financial status, is able to participate on an equal basis.

Even though our proposal fell on deaf ears and was ignored by this government, its principle was supported in the last two reports issued by Ontario’s Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, as one of his top priorities. Now, Mr. Essensa, too, is calling on the government to make elections fairer by capping third-party advertising. I think his findings are important, as they speak to the serious trouble brewing in our election process.

Just look at the evidence from our elections watchdog. In the 2007 election, \$1.8 million was spent on third-party advertising, in 2011, \$6 million; and in our most recent 2014 election, \$8.6 million, a jump of 400% or a tripling since 2007. And none of these expenses include such things as Web-based campaign videos, telephone town halls or demon dialers.

At the same time, voter turnout has been falling steadily too. Ontario used to enjoy a 65% voter turnout, but then, by the 2003 election, a 57% turnout; in the 2007 election, a 52% turnout; and in the 2011 election, a 48% turnout. The 2014 election saw a record high number of spoiled ballots; 31,399 Ontarians declined their votes in the last election, the highest rejection level since 1975. The largest protest votes hit the ridings of Brant, Etobicoke Centre, Kitchener–Waterloo, London West, Mississauga–Erindale, Oak Ridges–Markham, Ottawa South, St. Catharines, Windsor West and Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

These patterns are alarming. In my opinion, it is unacceptable. I could have chosen to sit by and idly complain, or I could step up and try to right the situation. I choose to take action.

I also believe we have a shared responsibility in fixing special interest spending and interference in elections, and re-engaging voters by putting a stop to that old adage of “No matter who you vote for, money always wins.” While self-serving political messages are part of our democratic system, the amount of money available to be spent nevertheless has to be capped, so that everyone is on a level playing field, regardless of how deep or not deep their pockets are.

I am a prime example. I was raised in a small village, from a family of very, very modest means. I wanted to serve the people, and I gave up a very good-paying job with a full pension to run in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I did so with much risk, with no guarantees of winning or how long I might be given the privilege of serving as the people’s representative. And I did so with the understanding that I had a set amount of money I could spend during a campaign to try to win the seat, and an expectation that anyone who would compete against me would have to play by the same rules.

If I had known a third-party group with virtually no limits and/or accountability or consequence could outspend me, at minimum 10 times, I’m not certain I would be here today. I have a concern that if this situation is not

corrected, it might severely restrict who might run for office in the future. This could have profound consequences for the foundation of our democratic process in the future, not to mention the impact of a party that has basically unfettered opposition or recourse as a result of undue influence of unelected people and resources. Being able to buy your way to office is simply not the Canadian way. If democracy for the people and by the people is to remain functional and true in future, realistic spending limits must be put in place. If not, then the system can and will be skewed by those who have the most money.

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In the last election of 2014, the groups with the most money in the bag had the most influence over voters and election outcome. This influence was bought for \$8.6 million, which is the total amount of money that special interest groups spent on partisan advertising during that 41-day writ period. There is no telling how high this influence will fly in the next or future elections when our laws don't enforce caps on third-party spending. We do know that special interest funding will keep going up.

As I mentioned earlier, third-party advertising spending has gone up by 400% since 2007, according to Elections Ontario. This means that unless we limit it, any special interest group, anyone with millions to spend, can and will try to buy an election and make it harder for everyone else to vote with their conscience. Subjecting voters' opinions via an orchestrated, multi-million dollar attack campaign from special interest groups is, frankly, an affront to fair and free elections.

This is precisely why I'm tabling this bill today to amend the Election Finances Act to make sure any special interest group's election advertising is capped at \$150,000 per election cycle, or \$3,000 per riding, to reflect the federal rules and caps in other provinces and to reflect what a candidate is currently able to spend. To make the rules meaningful, I'm proposing that any groups found in contravention be deregistered from the next general election. If there is no consequence, those who wish to influence the outcome will continue to pour money in to ensure victory for their desired candidate or party.

This proposal will ensure everyone plays fair in Ontario elections. As a PC MPP, I acknowledge that the current rules allowed any number of special interest groups to run negative campaigns during the election. It is not my intent to take away their right to participate, but to defend the right of everyone to do so on an even playing field, and for the voting public to expect, and accept, nothing less.

I believe the amendments I'm proposing would protect free speech in Ontario elections, the very essence of our democracy. Most importantly, the proposal is in line with the recommendations from our election watchdog, Mr. Essensa, and what I hear from the general electorate. No one is accepting of an unfair balance in regard to open democracy. It would be my sincere hope that the Liberal government of the day and members of the New Democratic Party agree—and I suggest any reputable third-

party group would not disagree—that an election needs to be open, transparent and fair.

Now, I know the government has mused about reviewing advertising rules, but given last spring's discreet announcement about changes to government advertising rules, I question their motive. Instead of tightening controls on the ability of the government to use public money for what is, in effect, partisan advocacy, this government is taking away the Auditor General's power to vet their ads, which will allow them to use taxpayers' dollars to pay for campaign advertising. Again, there must be accountability or there will be abuse.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Would the deputy House leader and the member from Dufferin–Caledon please take your debate outside. If not, you'll be warned. If I have to carry on, I will do so.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Quiet.

Mr. Bill Walker: In a very perverse way, this is their way of pretending they are doing something to make the system more fair to all, all the while continuing to stack the deck in their own favour. They know that under the system, they are the beneficiaries of an unfair system that disrespects the voter in our democratic process. We shouldn't buy it, because everything in their plan says they are stacking the laws against everybody else and ensuring they continue to be direct beneficiaries of these lax and unfair advertising laws. This will hurt our election process and will contribute to the decline of our democracy.

My challenge and recommendation to the government and the individual members in this Legislature is to embrace the spirit and efforts of Bill 96—that the members, their caucuses and leaders not be afraid of elections with limited third-party spending, but will be honest with the people who elected them and will do the right thing and right a system that provides unfair advantages to them. It is totally—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie, would you come to order. And the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, if you're going to heckle, I would like you to sit in your seat.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is totally self-serving and disrespectful to the people who put their trust in them to say they are changing a system and ensuring fairness when they know full well that is simply not true.

At the end of the day, we all have to look in the mirror and answer to our conscience.

Controlling expenditures does not totally eliminate undue and unfair influence, but letting them run rampant when the government knows there is an imbalance that benefits the individual and the party is simply unethical and unacceptable. It brings dishonour to politics and politicians and to the sacred principle of democracy and the Legislature we are all privileged to serve.

I hope the members of the Liberal government and the NDP will consider the moral imperative this time. Will they put the interests of the people they serve ahead of their own, or the direction of their leadership? Will they show respect for the institution of government and democracy? Will they do the honourable thing and support Bill 96 so Ontario can have more fair elections and free speech stays free?

I urge you to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing from everyone who is going to speak about it. I expect this will be a very spirited and healthy debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for bringing forward some legislation that will actually let us debate election finance reform.

The bill, essentially, is looking to do some caps. The one cap I find kind of interesting, the \$3,000 in any by-election—if you’ve ever run any print media ads, during an election period they usually triple or quadruple. This would lead to us actually having to pass legislation that would regulate the media industry to regulate their pricing during periods of elections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Not a bad idea.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. Anyway, this bill was first amended in June 2007 by the Liberals, and it continued to allow for this kind of advertising without any limits, but it did force them to register with Elections Ontario and release their spending details.

If we’re going to start putting forward changes like this, I think that instead of doing them one at a time, we should have a more nuanced debate and not just talk about things that may or may not inconvenience us.

The most cited example around third-party advertising is, of course, the Working Families Coalition. It probably is an attack on that particular agency—although there are hundreds of individuals and groups who actually do third-party advertising during campaigns. The Working Families Coalition certainly is known for having been pretty hard on the Conservatives and their former leader in the last election, so that may be part of the reason for this bill.

On the flip side, I just want to remind people of Bill 74. That was a bill that sought to help one singular company, EllisDon, a \$2-billion-a-year company. I remind members that that bill was buried in an omnibus government bill at the time. The government was trying to fast-track it through the Legislature without full scrutiny or debate. It was a scheme between the Liberals and the PCs, at the time. Here we have one company that’s an enormous contributor to the economy in Ontario but certainly doesn’t need the help of this Legislature to increase their profit margin.

There’s a long history of governments using taxpayers’ money to promote themselves during periods outside of campaigns and leading up to campaigns. The Harper government is cited as spending \$7.5 million in ads promoting his economic action plan. Mike Harris’s

government previously used hard-earned taxpayers’ dollars all the time, touting his own policies. Even when it wasn’t around legislation that was passed, he touted health care ideas, how to make government smaller and be “less taxing for all of us.” But what he didn’t tell us at the time was what the government cuts were going to be, how many hospitals beds he was going to close, and how many cities, towns and villages were going to lose their identity through mergers and amalgamations.

On the other side of the House—the Liberal government’s paid advertising—similar questions are as important. In this spring’s budget, the Liberal government made significant changes to the advertising rules. The legislation, again, was buried in a massive budget bill and was fast-tracked, and the taxpayers, who pay the freight for this advertising, didn’t have any say in it.

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The Auditor General’s office calls these new criteria that were passed “a very narrow and limited definition of what constitutes partisan advertising.” I think the government is still doing partisan advertising under this new legislation. The Auditor General said it was actually a fatal blow to the law. It restricts the Auditor General from actually being able to consider factors that they had in the past, like political context, the use of self-congratulatory messages, factual accuracy and an advertisement’s criticisms of other political parties. She warned about the government using taxpayer dollars for partisan purposes.

If we’re going to be drawing parallels, third parties are individuals or groups who actually spend dollars on advertising, but they’re spending their own dollars, unlike governments of the past—the Tories and the Liberals—who have spent taxpayers’ dollars for their own interests. We’ve seen this recently, this summer. The minister of—I can’t remember what her title is, but it was with respect to the ORPP. There was tons of advertising: taxpayers’ dollars used in a partisan way to advertise the ORPP. If that isn’t promoting partisan self-interest, I don’t know what is.

Ultimately, New Democrats support a review of the Election Finances Act, but we would like to see a more nuanced and honest conversation about how to get to a fairer place with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound regarding election finances. Quite frankly, this proposed bill flies in the face of democracy. It flies in the face of common sense. It flies in the face of freedom of expression, and I’ll tell you why.

Perhaps we’re targeting some groups today, but let’s say that at the next election the opposition party—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock for a second. When this side of the House had a chance to speak, I tried my best to control that side of the House. I would ask the same.

Carry on.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was just saying this flies in the face of freedom of expression. Perhaps by coincidence, we're dealing right now with a bill that's called anti-SLAPP legislation. It's a bill to prevent strategic lawsuits against public participation. In other words, if someone wants to speak out against a development or something going on out there—against someone who has deep pockets—what happens sometimes is that you speak out against it and that company decides to sue the person complaining: "You are trying to slander me. I'm going to sue you for \$2 million or \$3 million." We went through that whole exercise recently, and what we saw was that there were people out there who suffer from this, and we're correcting that.

Again, I think what this member is trying to do would be the opposite: to create SLAPP legislation. Right now, we're trying to limit the expenses of a third party. But imagine, next election, if a group comes out and is, let's say, opposed to the changes in the sex education curriculum. They'll be subject to limits, too, or any other group that wants to come out. Let's say the Leader of the Opposition campaigns, and there's another group that has the same position as the leader regarding the changes in the sex education curriculum. You're going to be limiting them as well.

The other thing, too, is that in an open democracy, we try to promote expression. We try to allow as much expression as possible from any source. We don't know: There could be another third party somewhere else that wants to get involved in the campaign and wants to advertise in the campaign. Should we shut them up too and say, "You can only spend so much money"?

Here, we're talking about one particular group that the member is basically trying to target today, but there are all sorts of other groups out there too that may want to speak in the future. It could be any group that wants to say something, and they would be limited to only spending a certain amount of money.

I think this bill is really dangerous, in the fact that it limits third parties from getting involved in the democratic process, in advertising. As mentioned as well earlier from the previous member that just spoke, there may be other groups that want to get out there and speak, and to limit them to a certain financial amount is not really the right thing to do.

Our party, the government, introduced or announced in June and in the 2015 budget that we'll be strengthening Ontario's rules on third-party advertising. We have committed to addressing the recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 2014 general election. We will be moving ahead with these additional items. So it's not buried away in some budget document; we are proceeding and we are committed to make the necessary changes regarding third-party advertising.

We have rules in place already in the Election Finances Act which control third parties and make them register how much they spent and report that to the Chief Electoral Officer. We have stuff in place that will work. In my opinion, I think that this goes much too far the

opposite way and creates an obstacle to freedom of expression and to allow people or groups to express their point of view. There could be many other ones out there that want to come out and speak on a certain matter.

We're all trying to enhance the integrity of the election finance system while at the same time protecting the public interest. What we can't do is implement changes or restrictions that prevent people from speaking up as they choose. I think that captures a wider range of advertising than any definition that captures issue advertising elsewhere in Canada.

Instead of regulating advertising that takes a position on an issue with a registered partner candidate, as has been the norm in other Canadian jurisdictions, this would mean that any advertising on any issue which the House is seized with would be regulated. I cannot stress enough how that would affect future groups that may want to get involved. Three years down the line, another group may come out and decide, "We want to spend so much money on a particular issue that's of concern to us." They may want to criticize us. They may want to compliment us, the government. They may want to compliment the opposition or they may want to compliment the third party, and say, "We're going to support the position that's taken by the opposition. We want them to get elected so we're going to advertise on their behalf."

So I think we need to take a really sober look at this whole issue because it's quite important to allow people, groups or organizations to speak at will in this province and across Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The leader of the opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before the Legislature today on this excellent bill put forward by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. First, let me commend the member for all his hard work. We are so lucky that you've put so much energy into this excellent bill.

This bill is being introduced to ensure that collusion between special interest groups and political parties does not occur while engaging in third-party advertising during the writ period.

The Chief Electoral Officer's 2012-13 annual report from Elections Ontario called on the Legislature for changes to third-party advertising. In the report, Greg Essensa suggested that imposing caps on third-party spending be considered, noting that Ontario's election laws—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy House leader, come to order. And the member for Dufferin-Caledon, if you would not respond, it will help me.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the report, Greg Essensa suggested that imposing caps on third-party spending be considered, noting that Ontario election laws do not specifically ban collusion between political parties and third parties.

No member in the House can feel that that's appropriate, and we should all hear the words of Greg Essensa.

He said that “rules regarding third-party advertising should be considered to align Ontario with the best practices in other provinces.”

Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and the federal government all have adopted controls over third-party advertising. Why is Ontario the laggard in this respect? They understand that representatives are elected to serve their constituents and their larger province or country, not to serve special interests. They also understand that elections should be decided on which ideas have the most merit, not if they offend special interests.

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Between 2007 and 2011, the amount spent by special interest groups on advertising tripled to \$6.7 million. By 2014, the amount jumped to \$8.6 million, a 400% increase from 2007. This leaves the door open for collusion and backroom dealings between the Liberal government and special interests.

I know members of the government will understand that, if they want to clear the air, if they want to make sure no one raises allegations that there is collusion with special interests, they will do the right thing, they will do the honourable thing and support the notion that this excellent bill puts forward.

There are a number of third-party groups that have spent money on advertising. The stats speak for themselves: In the 2014 campaign, by our calculations, 28 groups in total spent money on third-party advertising. If you take out the groups that spent less than \$100,000—this is not small special interest groups—of the \$8-million-plus spent, roughly 94% was spent by nine groups alone. How is that right? How is that appropriate, to diminish our democracy?

The Liberals voted against transparency in 2011 when the member for Wellington–Halton Hills put forward a bill to limit third-party collusion. They also voted against transparency when the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex put forward a similar proposal in 2013.

The government already plays fast and loose with the rules when it comes to taxpayer-funded government ads. The Auditor General recently complained that the new rules for the review of government ads have huge holes and huge loopholes that would leave the system available to be abused. We share her concerns.

The problem with third-party advertising is spiralling out of control. It is an affront to our political system; it is an affront to our democracy. My colleague's bill is a necessary step in the right direction. The spirit of the bill is about fairness. How can you vote against fairness? How can you vote against transparency? How can you vote to give special interests an advantage over your constituents? This is about our democracy. This is about what is right.

So I encourage all members of the Legislature not to do what may be convenient for political purposes, but to do what is right for Ontario, do what is right to stand up and protect our democracy: Support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is always an honour to stand in this place and engage in debate.

I want to commend the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for bringing this bill forward. As far as we're concerned, it's time to review the act. We want to look at it in all aspects. There's nothing wrong with that.

I was interested to hear the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition speak about democracy because I couldn't help—one can't help, occasionally, being a little cynical in this place. But, if I think about democracy, I think about things like Harper's—and by the way, Mr. Trudeau voted with him—Bill C-51, which limited all of our civil liberties and all of our democracy. So, when I think about democracy, I can't help but think about issues like that.

There is no question that—many members, the member from Scarborough Southwest talked about this too—money talks. It does talk. It talks in politics. There is no question about it. But, I think, what is most egregious, in terms of money talking, is when governments use taxpayers' dollars to do their own talking for their own partisan interests. I think we've had ample expressions of that from both the party to my right, literally and figuratively, and the party across the aisle. Certainly, we've seen Mr. Harper—the member from Welland talked about it—\$7.5 million touting the economic—what was it called—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —the Economic Action Plan; thank you—this before it was even passed, before it was even passed in the federal Legislature, touting it as if it were law and government policy.

Certainly we've seen from the party across the aisle, from the government, Metrolinx—hardly an arm's-length agency. Metrolinx—much hated, by the way, by anybody who lives along the tracks—spent \$17 million. They outdid Mr. Harper. They outdid the Prime Minister: \$17 million simply touting something that was happening anyway, supposedly government policy—selling it, in effect, selling it in Liberal self-interest, because, quite frankly, it's not in the interest of anybody in Toronto, certainly not in my riding. In fact, they're listening to those bells every 15 minutes all night long. It's keeping them awake, it's keeping people with health problems up, and for what? The UP Express has, like, two people in a car travelling to the airport and back. We're paying for that, all of us, and taxpayers are paying to be annoyed, to have their health put at risk, not to have a relief line, not to be able to travel, because it is too expensive. And by the way, business travellers can't travel on it either because they would be insane to, because business travellers get to write off their cab expenses. And by the way, we won't get into Uber, but Uber's even cheaper. So this is a total white elephant that's running up and down the tracks, and it took \$17 million for the government to tell us how wonderful it all is.

What else?

The member from Welland was absolutely right. I immediately went to the EllisDon bill. Look at that. That

was passed in about two weeks. EllisDon, one of the biggest companies in Canada, got their way through legislation in about two weeks. Wow. Money talks. Yes, it does. Certainly it does. And certainly it does where politicians are concerned.

If we look at what our Liberal friends across the aisle have done for the insurance industry, for example, oh, my goodness, does money talk there. Wasn't there a promise somewhere back then to lower auto insurance rates by 15%? I think we negotiated that. It never really happened. But guess what? Insurance rates have gone up, and guess what? Payouts for those victims in accidents have gone way down.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes. In homage to Rosie, yes. Absolutely, Liberals and Conservatives got together on that one.

Yes, money talks, sadly. I would go even further. When he was talking about special interest groups, I couldn't help but think about the National Citizens Coalition. If there ever was a Conservative special interest group, it's that. And they carry ads, don't they? I remember their ads. The Fraser Institute, C.D. Howe—by the way, interesting collusion again: In Toronto Centre we have somebody who was a chair of the C.D. Howe running for the Liberals. Wow. Who knew? Conservatives and Liberals again. Again, money talking, money talking in a third-person context.

Absolutely, New Democrats want to see democracy. And by the way, talking about democracy, wouldn't it be great if we had proportional representation? Wouldn't that be good? Because then our votes would actually count. I would say to my friends to the right here that in my riding—where, sadly, Conservatives don't stand a chance; their votes are all wasted—your votes would count in my riding if we had proportional representation. Ditto in other ridings for the Liberals or New Democrats, or the Green Party, for that matter, as the case may be.

Again, there are lots of ways of making our system more democratic. There are lots of ways of bringing this system to a more level playing ground. There are lots of ways of doing that. This is perhaps a start. We're going to let it pass. We think it should go to committee and we think we should have this fulsome discussion about how money talks and how it shouldn't. Or perhaps we should quiet its voice down a little bit, especially with our wealthy friends out there.

Oh, and by the way—last words—today the Premier was standing there with Justin Trudeau and the transportation minister, right there, the Premier of Ontario talking about how wonderful Liberals are. She is not only the Liberal Premier of Ontario; she is the Premier for everyone. If we want to talk about democracy, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about that: how, when you are elected, you don't just represent the people who voted for you from your own party; you represent everybody in your constituency—everybody, those who didn't vote for you either. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: If I could take this opportunity to bring a little baseball analogy, I guess I get the opportunity to be cleanup for our party on this side of the House.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You're going to need a big shovel.
1410

Mr. Arthur Potts: A big show? I've got the member from Scarborough Southwest, who hit a pretty solid double, I'd say. It's my opportunity to bring him home, and I'll be following right behind him.

I am delighted for this opportunity to speak to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound's motion today, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising.

On its face, it's a good start; it gets us going in the right direction because it purports to do exactly what we're already doing with the Election Finances Act: not allow candidates, parties, riding associations, to hide and shield their expenditures during the course of an election campaign behind third-party advertising. We already have rules governing that within the place and it may be, as the member for Scarborough Southwest indicated, that there is a review. It was announced in our last budget. We are going to take a look at whether some of those aspects of third-party advertising need to be strengthened.

These safeguards do currently exist. They may need to be bumped up. Everyone who's spending in advertising is a third party. If they're spending more than \$500, they have to register, and there's your transparency and accountability. We know who they are because they registered. If they spend more than \$5,000, their statements have to be audited back. We have a good sense of where they're spending and how they're spending.

These rules are in place, but I do appreciate the member bringing this forward because it does help us start this discussion on what other measures need to be in place. But I am a little concerned with the way he has approached it in this bill. I mean, this whole notion under section 37.1, issue advertising—it starts to very much narrow the scope and get down to prohibitions against public participation, which I would find quite difficult to support.

I just came from justice committee earlier today where we did clause-by-clause of the SLAPP bill, and you know what SLAPP is all about? It's there in order to protect against big bully groups silencing people, silencing public discussion and public participation through the threats of lawsuits etc.

What I see this bill is an opportunity—for a party to slap down public participation in meaningful debates, because it goes at the issues. What I've seen in my experience and a lot of work in the municipal election areas were community groups that come up—dog walkers of X park are looking for a leash-free zone, or a community organization with their issue being a development. They will get out and they will advocate against that. In my experience, their advocacy tends not to be in favour of any one party.

When we see in the act, it talks—it's always doing it "on behalf of." It gets to the Leader of the Opposition's comments, which I think, when taken, are a little ill-advised, to be accusing people of collusion. Collusion is fraudulent and the act would get to that—go ahead; prove it. Under the bill that currently exists, if someone is spending that money "on behalf of," it's included as an election expense. It's taken very seriously and it's the kind of thing that we've seen from members from the party opposite. They've been thrown out of office in Peterborough for overspending, when they start to include all the things that were done on their behalf.

This is very important: that our act currently gets at the collusion acts. For him to be throwing on accusations—particularly, Mr. Speaker, as you know, that as an MP, the Leader of the Opposition was solidly endorsed by the Campaign Life Coalition, a huge-spending organization with a very specific issue. Now, it's okay in Ottawa to take that kind of an endorsement, that kind of activity, to have them buy memberships on your behalf, but it's not okay in Ontario. You are seeing a bit of the transformation of the Leader of the Opposition when he's understanding what real politics are like in Ontario.

We also had the example that he was fully endorsed by the Ontario Landowners Association—

Interjection: Oh, wow.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Right, exactly—also selling memberships on his behalf.

I welcome the public participation of the groups that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, was stirring up in this community about the physical health education program because, through the kind of discussions that they were encouraging, which we were 100% satisfied were actually reading the act as it was or the new guidelines as they were—but people got involved. For us to be thinking about silencing those whole communities by putting the onerous requirements of excessive legal and accounting and registration matters—you've got to hire a lawyer now in order to stand up in your community and say, "I don't like what this guy has done."

What I have always experienced is that third-party advertising, which is important, is never about "on behalf of"; it's "in opposition to." It's not endorsing one particular point of view or another; it's saying, "We don't like when this has happened." You get that thing which we see now happening federally: the Anyone but Harper campaign. That's what third-party advertising does. It's not saying, "We're going to vote this party or that." It's saying, "We don't want the one that's there." That's been the direction of focused third-party advertising.

To the extent that you want to silence debate, I think we need to be very careful. In an era where people are not coming out to vote like they used to, with declining participation rates, particularly amongst young people, we want to be out there encouraging and not having this constant threat of the big stick coming down with a huge fine if you get out there and exercise your democratic right. So I think I'll have to vote against this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: First off, that is unfortunate. However, I do appreciate the chance to comment on this act because I will be voting in favour of An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising, brought forward by, of course, my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, as it is a very important issue—the concept of fair and democratic elections—that is our responsibility to uphold as MPPs.

As we've heard, this bill amends the Election Finances Act, expanding the definition of third-party election advertising to include issue advertising or advertising designed to take a position on any provincial legislative issue. It proposes to impose a \$150,000 cap in general elections and \$3,000 in relation to a by-election, with penalties set at five times the full amount of the expenses incurred.

Speaker, we in this House all know that the issue of third-party advertising has been a concern, not only for us as the official opposition, but also for Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer. Elections Ontario's 2012-13 annual report called for legislative changes to third-party advertising laws and saw Greg Essensa suggest consideration of caps on third-party spending. It's that call that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is helping to answer today.

It's an answer that is in the best interests of all Ontarians to support, as when we allow any political party to join with third parties in a "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" relationship, it's the taxpayers who end up getting gouged in the end. We've heard the numbers and they are concerning. Between 2007 and 2011, the amount spent by special interest groups on advertising tripled to \$6.7 million, and by 2014 that amount jumped to \$8.6 million—money that is used to blur the lines and create uneven playing fields for what are supposed to be fair and democratic elections.

Speaker, closer to my home, I think of the September 2012 Ontario by-election, when third-party interest groups spent nearly \$1 million on advertising—almost four times more than the political party which eventually emerged victorious in Kitchener–Waterloo. These groups included well-known unions like the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, which spent \$846,000, according to returns filed with Elections Ontario in April.

The fact is that third parties could have spent a virtually unlimited amount of money during by-elections or any other campaign because Ontario's election laws do nothing to restrict interest groups in the same way as they restrict spending by political parties and candidates. This advantages deep-pocketed groups with political opinions and runs counter to democratic principles of fairness. We see that to the south, in essence, using Super PACs, America's independent political action committees, which can spend an unlimited amount of money, so long as they do not donate to a political candidate.

Again, Speaker, the concern remains that when we have Super PAC-like groups forming to promote one

candidate or one party over another, it unfairly tilts the playing field, creating political advantages that, as far as I have been taught, are not the Ontario way.

I know my colleague from Nipissing will finish up our last three minutes. I just really believe we all need to support the fair and equitable principles reflected in today's private member's bill to limit spending on third-party advertising.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nipissing, further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I, too, am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 96, an excellent bill from our member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Speaker, you've heard this already: The Chief Electoral Officer's 2012-13 annual report was clear in calling for legislative changes to third-party advertising laws. He was very clear. Our leader, Patrick Brown, gave you the details from Greg Essensa a few minutes ago, so let's move on then to some new topics.

Let's hear what the Toronto Star's Martin Regg Cohn had to say about the issue and what he calls a "growing threat to Ontario's democracy." Martin said, "The national ban on big money politics showcases the best of democracy for all Canadians—except Ontarians.

"Thanks to Kathleen Wynne"—I'm quoting from the Toronto Star—"Ontario will still be the Wild West of campaign financing rules when the next provincial election takes place....

"Our Premier could learn a thing or two about democracy from our Prime Minister," Stephen Harper.

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Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Martin Regg Cohn's comment. That's exactly what Martin said.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "Which way will Ontario go? How much longer will" Premier "Wynne hide behind the fig leaf of 'transparency,' while fundraising and negative advertising undermine our democracy?"

I couldn't agree with Martin from the Star any more.

But there's something you need to hear, Speaker, and it's more about what the Liberal government thinks when they pulled this in the last budget: They put into the budget massive changes to government advertising. So shocking were these changes that the Auditor General came out with a special report, and here are some of the details.

They changed the class of advertising messages the government is allowed to convey. The auditor told us these amendments allow the government to make changes and remove the discretion of the Auditor General. From the Auditor General: "We disagree with this amendment."

There's another one about whether ads meet the standards "in his or her opinion." The auditor said, "The discretion of" the auditor "is removed," and, "We disagree with this amendment."

She narrowed the definition of partisan advertising. The auditor told us, "New definition of 'partisan' in the GAA removes any discretionary authority that the Auditor General and her panel of experts exercise in approving or rejecting advertising. We disagree with this amendment."

The member's title to be used in the government advertising was snuck in by this government. The auditor told us, "This change limits our authority to determine the appropriateness" of an ad with terms such as the use of the word Premier. "We disagree with this amendment."

Finally, the auditor told us about "advertising during an election period is not permitted." This is what was snuck in, in the last budget. The auditor said, "This change removes the Auditor General's discretion and empowers the government to run any ad it chooses during an election period," and the Auditor General of our province disagrees with this amendment.

It's time for Ontario to respect democracy, level the playing field and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to thank each member for taking part in today's debate. It truly was a spirited debate, and that's what it should be.

I want to bring up one point. The member for Scarborough Southwest characterized this bill, in his word, as "dangerous." I find this disappointing and, frankly, hypocritical. This member was praising Mr. Essensa's recommendations as "excellent" in Hansard, September 28, 2015, so I'm confused as to why, two weeks later—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

I'm confused as to why, two weeks later, when given the opportunity to put them in place, he finds them dangerous.

I think we owe it to the Ontario public to have this debate, to voice why we believe voting is important and how we want to reverse the voter apathy trend and re-engage Ontarians in the process. I also believe it is incumbent on all of us to challenge the status quo. In my opinion, the status quo can also have a significant impact in regard to who is willing to run for office and the type of candidates any party might get in future.

I'm very concerned about how any of us are able to compete fairly when political candidates have very definite caps and special interest groups do not. This could very well impact you, if not today, perhaps in a future campaign should the loyalties of special interest groups change—and we know these interests do change.

I want to reiterate that Bill 96 will put Ontario's election laws on common ground with the rest of our country by making sure election advertising is capped at \$150,000 per election cycle, to reflect the federal rules and caps in other provinces. Some members question the cap amount, and I just want to remind them that it's

indexed to inflation. Most importantly, the cap is in line with the rest of the country, if even more generous.

I believe the amendments I'm proposing, which are in line with the recommendations from election watchdog Mr. Greg Essensa are fair and will protect free speech in Ontario elections, the very essence of our democracy, and re-engage voters. It's about people like the pages, whom I want to thank for their service here, to ensure that the people watching at home, if they were able to judge today, would be able to better judge where each one of us here stands with regard to free, fair and transparent elections. I hope they'll hear your message that you too reject the lax election spending rules, and that you will use your vote today to change that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on that item at the end of private members' public business.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES INFRASTRUCTURES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made, should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved private member's notice of motion number 53. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. Since I was elected in 2011, I have made it my priority to speak for the municipalities I represent. Having served as a municipal councillor, I know that municipalities need to build, maintain and manage their infrastructure. They know what they need and when they need it. They know they are accountable to their residents. They expect the province to be a partner. They know that provincial dollars are limited, but they expect them to be invested fairly. They expect a transparent process, one that respects their staff time and their budget. Finally, they expect the process to be untainted by politics because no riding, no municipality and no taxpayer should ever be punished for their voting history or the political stripe of their MPP. These principles underpin my resolution. They should not be controversial, and that's why I'm asking for all-party support.

It's regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that this debate is even necessary. It's necessary because municipalities' expectations of fairness are too often not being met. In my time today I will show examples. I will also mention some feedback that this resolution has received. No doubt the government will say, "We've invested so many dollars in

Perth–Wellington and so many dollars in other opposition ridings. Doesn't that show our generosity?" It will do no such thing. What matters is how people actually perceive this government and the way it operates when it comes to infrastructure and how it interacts with municipalities.

In opposition, we can't control the way they operate. All I can do is speak for the people I represent, making sure the government knows our needs and priorities. I've always sought to do so in a spirit of co-operation, working across the aisle because, at the end of the day, my constituents expect to see results.

That's why, on the day after the last election, I wrote to Premier Wynne saying, "I want to work with you on the priorities that matter to the people of Perth–Wellington. I intend to be constructive but persistent in speaking up for them."

I went on to identify some of the issues around our riding, including infrastructure, but this government rarely responds in kind. It rarely responds with constructive action. It rarely responds in a spirit of non-partisanship, and it's a problem not unique to my riding.

Just look next door at Huron–Bruce, a riding well represented by Lisa Thompson. Look at the Liberals' decision to scrap the Kincardine hospital redevelopment. It's obvious that it was needed and the government agreed when they approved it, but then they backed away when the former Liberal MPP was defeated and the electoral advantage of the project disappeared.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, called it a "scandal of political partisanship and opportunism," and he's right. That's why my resolution stresses the need for equal and transparent consideration in funding decisions. They promise billions for new infrastructure in Liberal ridings, even as they changed or scrapped the programs we rely on in rural Ontario, all without consultation.

They're selling off Hydro One, primarily affecting opposition ridings, to finance their expensive promises to their own ridings—again without consultation.

Their funding priorities seem to change depending on where you live. The Waterloo region LRT is partially funded, while Hamilton's LRT is fully funded. They scrapped the Connecting Link Program, which they finally promised to bring back, but with little details and at a fraction of what it used to be.

OMPF funding is another example affecting nearly every municipality I represent. They're squeezing municipalities, with no consultation, based on inaccurate information. They do it because they can get away with it. After all, we're just opposition ridings.

1430

I also want to address the theme of transparency in this resolution. Here's what Gary McNamara, the president of AMO, had to say: "Getting infrastructure funding is as unpredictable as winning the lottery. The status quo is not acceptable. We need a new arrangement."

I want to recount an experience from the county of Wellington, which I represent. In January, the government asked the county why they didn't apply to the Small

Communities Fund. Their response reads in part, “Wellington county has provided an expression of interest to the province on three prior application processes ... and were not successful in passing the initial ‘screening’ test.”

It continues: “Putting together these applications requires significant staff resources. If our economic conditions and fiscal situation are going to preclude the county from being successful in future grant applications, we would appreciate the province letting us know this up front so that we can avoid wasting future staff resources and scarce municipal tax dollars in a fruitless fishing expedition in which we very well know that our chances for success are minuscule at best.”

We hear this time and time again. The government sets up an infrastructure program severely, perhaps deliberately, lacking transparency. They compel municipal staff to waste countless hours jumping through hoops to apply for funding.

Other municipalities have resorted to hiring professional consulting firms. These are small municipalities that don’t have tens of thousands of dollars to spend on consultants to fill out forms for funding they will probably never see. Others have even suggested hiring lobbyists to get their government’s attention.

For years, we’ve told the government to fix the process. They haven’t done it. Instead, they play partisan games.

In March, for instance, the Deputy Premier came to Perth–Wellington to meet with the mayors in our riding. Understandably, they wanted to discuss infrastructure. They wanted to know why the Liberals cancelled the Connecting Link Program, something the Deputy Premier apparently knew nothing about. They wanted to know why the province was starving them of OMPF funding without the promised offsets.

Who organized and attended these meetings? Not the Deputy Premier’s staff—that job went to the unelected, former Liberal candidate, to whom the Minister of Agriculture must have given the day off.

I later wrote to the Deputy Premier to reiterate the municipalities’ concerns, which I have been raising for a very long time. Of course, the Deputy Premier didn’t respond. But here’s the worst part: When the media asked the Deputy Premier about her meeting with the mayors, she said, “I just wanted to connect with them and hear what is top of mind for advice for the province. They had a lot of advice,” she chuckled. “We had a really good meeting,” she went on to say, and, “If John [Wilkinson] was still MPP here he would have a chance to have meetings like that.”

I spoke to participants, and they couldn’t believe it. They were also surprised that she would invite the unelected Liberal candidate to the meeting, but not the elected MPP. When the Deputy Premier, with the former candidate, on the taxpayers’ dime, meets with elected mayors to discuss infrastructure, and when she says, in effect, that she would include a Liberal MPP but ignore an opposition MPP, she reveals her government’s true attitude. She confirms every suspicion that this govern-

ment is playing partisan games with infrastructure. She confirms that this government is treating public money as Liberal money. She confirms that this government would be so partisan, they would actually punish municipalities in opposition ridings. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, absolutely shameful.

I want to move on to the final part of my resolution, that all MPPs be given fair and equal advance notice of funding announcements. This isn’t happening. Instead, the Liberals from nearby ridings are traipsing into opposition ridings to announce funding. In August, the member for Cambridge, PA to the Minister of Transportation, announced social service funding for my riding. The news release came not from the ministry, but from the constituency office in Cambridge. The office of the Minister of Community and Social Services told us, “We just give a bit of a heads-up to our members to share the good news.”

In November of last year, the government didn’t even use an MPP. They went straight back to their unelected former Liberal candidate to announce public money. They were content to have the elected MPPs read about it in the paper.

In Simcoe–Grey, the member was told he could not speak at an infrastructure announcement in his own riding. Instead, they sent a Liberal to take credit. Games like these reinforce the perception—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If the member from Barrie can’t stop, I will have to warn you.

Carry on.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In Simcoe–Grey, the member was told he could not speak at an infrastructure announcement in his own riding. Instead, they sent a Liberal to take credit. Games like these reinforce the perception—many believe the reality—that opposition ridings are unfairly disadvantaged.

I want to move on to the feedback we have received on this motion. It comes from organizations like the Ontario Good Roads Association. It comes from the 115 municipalities, and counting, that endorse this resolution. They are from PC, NDP and even Liberal ridings.

Essex County Warden Tom Bain was quoted: “It appears now that funding is going to some areas ... and others are getting very little funding.”

Elgin county’s resolution states, “It is crucial that applications be evaluated based on merit and not on the political affiliation of a riding’s MPP.”

In Perth–Wellington, this resolution enjoys support from the county of Perth, the city of Stratford, the township of Perth East, the township of North Perth, the town of St. Marys, the township of Mapleton and the township of Wellington North.

The town of St. Marys’ resolution states: “That the council for the town of St. Marys expects southwestern Ontario to receive its fair and non-partisan share of the Moving Ontario Forward infrastructure investment....”

Mayor Walter McKenzie of West Perth wrote to me about infrastructure criteria that penalizes agricultural communities and those that demonstrate sound fiscal

management: “The assumption that agriculturally based municipalities are more well off financially based on limited economic indicators is a myth....” I appreciate the mayor’s comments.

It’s encouraging that so many mayors have gone on record to support this resolution. What’s interesting is what people are saying off the record. One mayor, who asked to remain unnamed, said this: “I fully support your efforts and agree a per capita formula is more transparent and avoids the politics of government versus opposition members.”

Another municipal representative said this: “I hope you’ll understand that we do have a few things ongoing with the province and don’t want to jeopardize this dialogue at the present time.” It’s a real shame that any municipal councillor, standing up for their constituents, would feel constrained from speaking publicly about this matter.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, this resolution is a first step to correct perception, often the reality, that this government is punishing opposition ridings for voters’ democratic choices.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’m honoured to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh and support this motion put forward by my good friend from Perth–Wellington, Mr. Pettapiece. I’ve taken the opportunity to discuss the motion with Mr. Pettapiece, and he’s given me some of the background that led to this. I understand where he’s coming from.

I recall the results of the last election. The Liberals held the one seat in London but were shut out in the rest of southwestern Ontario. It was a stunning defeat. The cabinet minister who represented Windsor West lost to Ms. Gretzky of the NDP. Within hours, the media asked the Premier what that would mean for the good people in Windsor and Essex county. The Premier didn’t bat an eye. She said that she wouldn’t forget about Windsor. She said that she wouldn’t forget about any part of Ontario where the Liberals no longer held a seat. She said that she was going to be the Premier for all of Ontario, not just for those ridings where the Liberals manage to get elected or re-elected.

Let’s look at the wording in this motion. The member for Perth–Wellington—by the way, Speaker, Mr. Pettapiece’s roots run deep in Essex county; I think he’s related to half the people I know in the town of Kingsville—Mr. Pettapiece says: “That, in the opinion of this House, the government should guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made,” and an announcement is planned within the riding, the government “should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal notice of the official announcement.”

1440

The way I read the second part of the motion is that if a minister or parliamentary assistant is coming into an

opposition-held riding to make a funding announcement, the opposition member holding that riding be given ample notice of the time and place of the announcement. Speaker, as a further courtesy, the opposition member would actually be invited to attend the ceremony or event when the announcement is being made. That’s pretty straightforward—at least to me.

How many times have we, in this chamber, heard the Premier, her cabinet colleagues and the other members of the party say, “We are open and transparent in all that we do”? I would suggest that if you are open and transparent, or wish to be perceived as being open and transparent, then you have no choice but to vote in favour of this motion put forward by the good member from Perth–Wellington.

Let me turn my attention now to the first part of the motion, “equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding.” In my part of the province, in the county of Essex and the city of Windsor, the perception remains that we’re not getting our fair share when it comes to the recent distribution of infrastructure funding. I’m not talking about the massive highway project that is nearing completion, leading to a proposed new international border crossing; I’m speaking of the requests that have gone in for funding assistance on smaller projects: an ultra-high-speed fibre optics network, better highway connections, expansion work on bridges, funding for an approved transit system, investments in social housing and the like.

The president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, my friend Gary McNamara, is also the mayor of Tecumseh. He runs a tight ship, but believes his local community is being penalized for keeping its books in good shape while government grants are going to places where they’re not as good at balancing the books. AMO has long called for predictable and sustainable funding on a per capita basis.

The mayor of LaSalle, my friend Ken Antaya, feels the same way. LaSalle, which is in Mr. Natyshak’s riding of Essex, has applied for 11 infrastructure grants in the past three years and has received only one.

The Essex county warden, my friend Tom Bain, is also the mayor of Lakeshore, which is also in the riding of Essex. The county recently passed a unanimous motion of support for a more equitable system of distributing infrastructure funding from the government. They said it would be done in a fair and non-partisan way. They agreed with the member from Perth–Wellington—equal and transparent funding. Is that too much to ask for?

Speaker, you know as well as I and the rest of us that when it comes to money collected for tax purposes in Ontario from all three orders of government, municipal taxes account for just 9% of the total. The province and the feds get the lion’s share of the tax money that comes out of your pocket. You may be surprised to know, as will the Toronto-centric members, I’m sure, that of the 444 municipalities in Ontario, half of them have to raise taxes if they need as little as \$50,000 for an infrastructure

project. Our smaller municipalities need financial help from the senior orders of government when it comes to infrastructure. Governments shouldn't be playing favourites.

There's no excuse for not inviting the local member to attend a funding announcement in that member's riding. That should be a recognized courtesy. It shouldn't be left up to the minister's discretion or the aide of a parliamentary assistant. That's petty politics. That's not open and transparent politics. That's a slap in the face to the voters in this province who made a democratic choice at the ballot box and chose someone other than the candidate put forward by the party currently in power. Such direction shouldn't be allowed. The Premier should send out a directive saying it won't be tolerated, saying that all 107 members in this House deserve the same respect and all 107 ridings deserve equal consideration for infrastructure spending.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to say something on this bill. I have to thank the member from Perth-Wellington for putting this motion forward. I agree with him. I don't think it's necessary. You would think that this is done, and it is done, by the government.

I'm pleased to hear the members across the floor agreeing on the importance of infrastructure investment because, on this side, we've been talking about that since last year, and recently we haven't heard much support on the other side.

I share his passion, the intention and motivation for speaking up for his right. I'm doing the same thing. I want more infrastructure investment in my riding of Trinity-Spadina as well. You know, we have all these condo owners, and every morning they have to struggle to get on the streetcar to go to work. They have to wait for five streetcars to go by before they can get on one. We have these issues in the downtown core as well. So I completely share his intention, why it is so important for infrastructure investment taking place in his hometown.

But I disagree with this motion because it implies that our government has not been investing according to the people's needs. This motion is implying that there are some politics involved in the distribution of public funds. I think this motion would probably be better served at a federal level, in the House of Commons, because we've seen for the past few years—for the past 10 years, I should say—where the federal government has distributed their funds. Certainly it is not coming to Ontario. We have a fairness issue. We have a shortage of federal money here in Ontario when it comes to infrastructure investment. So I share the intention and I just feel it's not equal when it comes to provincial versus federal intention to invest in infrastructure.

I would also like to point out that when the Premier goes out talking about infrastructure investment on transportation, you know, she talks about \$16 billion invested in the GTHA, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and \$15 billion outside of the GTHA, for the very

reason that we want to make sure the investment for our infrastructure in Ontario is kept in a fair manner when it comes to an urban and suburban setting versus a rural setting. I notice that every time the Premier talks about infrastructure investment and every time she talks about transit investment, she talks about roads and bridges for that very reason.

I also would like to highlight the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, or OCIF. It's another steady source for predictable and long-term funding for infrastructure projects in small and rural or northern communities. The OCIF provides \$100 million per year to help communities build or repair bridges and other critical infrastructure.

We have already allocated \$50 million per year to 426 communities across the province, using a fair and transparent formula that recognizes that municipalities have different infrastructure needs and fiscal situations. Those key infrastructure investments—I just want to read to you some. My seatmate here, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, challenged the member across with some real examples and numbers.

So here it is. I'll provide you some numbers: \$8 million in Algoma district; \$10 million in Cochrane district; \$3.2 million in Dufferin county; \$5.5 in Elgin county; \$4.8 million in Essex county; \$1.3 million in Frontenac county; \$1.5 million in Hastings county; \$1.9 million in Kenora district; \$2.2 million in Lambton county; \$2.2 million in Leeds and Grenville county; \$3.5 million in Nipissing district; \$5.7 million in Parry Sound district; \$4.8 million in Peterborough county; \$3 million in Prescott and Russell; \$2.7 million in Rainy River district; \$5.7 million in Renfrew county—my good friend from Renfrew county is not here, but he's happy to hear that, I'm sure—\$3.5 million in Simcoe county; \$2.4 million in Sudbury district; \$5.3 million in—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

1450

Ms. Lisa Thompson: Speaker, I don't think that it's appropriate in this House when a member draws attention to whether another member is present or not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'd just remind the member that the tradition of this House is not to mention anybody who's not here.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm sorry, Speaker, but I thought I'd share some good news with the House; it's exciting.

This is very obvious, that this government, on this side, has been investing based on a very fair manner. Really, we looked at what people need and what we can do to make their commute easier when it comes to infrastructure investment.

I am very proud of our record. I agree with the motion, I'll be supporting it, but I just want to point out that if we are going to speak to fairness, we need to speak fairly to the facts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Perth–Wellington has brought forward a very important initiative into this House this afternoon, calling upon the government to “guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding, and that when funding decisions are made,” the government “should guarantee that all MPPs, whether in government or opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement.” I completely agree with what the member is proposing, and I hope that all members will support it when it comes to a vote later on this afternoon.

But I want to give credit to the member for Perth–Wellington for the great job that he does in this House, on behalf of the people of his riding, Perth–Wellington, as well as being a trusted voice for rural Ontario as a whole. I’ve been privileged to work with him. Because we both share parts of Wellington county, we work together on a whole range of issues affecting the county of Wellington. I’ve come to know him very well.

He is a trusted voice for rural and small-town Ontario. He’s a trusted voice for local health care services in his riding and a trusted voice on agriculture. He’s a trusted community builder, because of the great work that he has done as a local community leader—even before he was elected to the Legislature, four years ago this very week, on October 6, 2011. He’s a trusted father and grandfather, and I know his family supports him; he’s very fortunate to have the love and support of his family.

I think he has outlined in his speech this afternoon a number of good reasons why this resolution needs to be brought to the floor of the Legislature. Surely the government is going to be fair to all ridings across the province, not punish ridings for the way they voted in the last election if they elected an opposition member and not take that kind of an approach, especially when it comes to—imagine—health care funding. If, indeed, the government is using health care funding and hospital capital announcements, and punishing communities that haven’t voted for a Liberal candidate in the election, that’s just totally unacceptable—if, indeed, that’s happening.

There are a number of examples that we have been talking about today, of course. In the 2012 Liberal budget, the government reneged on a number of promises that were made in the 2011 election, four of which were in PC-held ridings. Again, apparently commitments were made for a new emergency room at the South Bruce Grey Health Centre in Kincardine—a \$52-million emergency room, the first part of a \$105-million hospital rebuild—promised before the election, but then axed after the election.

A \$30-million expansion of the ambulatory and mental health wings at Wingham and District Hospital in Huron–Bruce, promised before the election, was cancelled after the election—again, a riding that’s held by the member for Huron–Bruce, our member Lisa Thompson. The government has since offered only \$3 million for upgrades and maintenance for a project that really requires \$30 million.

Projects at Brockville General Hospital’s mental health and St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital’s emergency, ambulatory and in-patient projects were both re-structured to reduce government costs—again, promises made before the election and then axed after the election. After seven years of development and planning, the McGuinty Liberals cancelled plans for a \$136.8-million rebuild of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

These are a number of examples. We bring them to the House today. We ask the government to respond. But certainly we continue to call upon the government to be fair to all ridings across the province, not to be so aggressively partisan such that they’re actually in some cases penalizing and punishing ridings for the way they voted or for their historical voting patterns.

Certainly when there have been infrastructure announcements in my riding by the government, I have tried to, obviously, publicly thank the government for their support of these projects. In many cases they are projects that I have advocated for vocally in this House and will continue to do so. Certainly we appreciate the infrastructure investments in Wellington–Halton Hills, and I’m prepared to thank the government. Again, I would ask them to think about the way they’ve behaved in some of these other instances, in some of the other ridings held by opposition members, and pause for a minute and consider how petty it seems that they’re behaving in some of these cases. Excessive partisanship is not what the people of Ontario want or what the people of Ontario will be voting for in the next election.

Again, I’d ask the members opposite to consider that and ask them to support this resolution today to show that, going forward at least, we’re going to have fairness in terms of infrastructure announcements and that, when announcements are made, there’s going to be an extension of respect to the elected members, whether they are government members or opposition members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it’s always a pleasure and a privilege to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

Just before I start, there are a few individuals I want to recognize. I don’t think many of us take the time to recognize the amount of work—I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look at the corner over there. There is always a smile in that corner over there. Her name is Lizzie, and she does a fantastic job for us for translation. She is always smiling, even when you meet her out in the hallways. It’s always great to see her.

These wonderful things that we have, I would encourage you to get familiar with them, because some of my speech will be in French today, so some of you might want to listen.

I also want to say to a good friend of mine, who I firmly believe is family: Stew, take care, buddy. I’m thinking about you.

It’s always a privilege to stand in this House and share a few words, particularly with the member from Perth–

Wellington, who I want to congratulate, first on bringing this bill forward. I think it's an important discussion that we need to have in this House. Also, I want to congratulate him on his anniversary, as well as mine. It's our fourth year together.

There are quite a few of us in this room who came in in the class of 2011, and I know it's a significant milestone for all of us. That group that did come in in 2011, from all three parties: I believe we have a special bond, all of us. We came in in a minority government and we learned very quickly how we have to work together. It was nice to be part of that group and I cherish every opportunity we have, when we do have a discussion together about various things.

When it comes to this particular bill, I'm always one to stand in my place, and I try to always be positive. I've worked with members from my friend's caucus here on several occasions. I see my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound over there. We worked extremely hard, along with Minister Gravelle, in order to make sure that the Chi-Cheemaun ran when it needed to operate; that on the \$40 million that could have been lost over the course of those periods, we dug our heels in, we rolled up our sleeves and we said, "We've got to get this done." That is something that I can hold with great pride, that all of us did together.

It's funny—and I don't know if I shared this with my friend. The day I was going to South Baymouth, there was a huge protest. The community members were frustrated that their request for help wasn't being answered. I stood there, and I was going to say some maybe aggressive words toward the minister—and it's funny, because in South Baymouth there's not very much cell service, but he got me on my cell. He called me; he reached out. He said, "Hey, Mike, I want you to know we came through with it and we got it." The whole tone of the announcement changed that day. I have to say, kudos to the minister. He gave me the opportunity to make the official announcement that the funding had come through; the boat was going to sail; the docks were going to be repaired. That's a good-news story. You give credit where credit is due.

I have to remember as well that on another occasion I harassed my good friend, who was then the Minister of Transportation and is now the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He took a personal interest in my issue. He actually came down to the riding in Espanola. We looked at the area of road that was of concern for the community of Espanola and also all of the municipalities that are on the island. He understood the need.

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I'm an MPP who believes that you need to touch, feel, taste and see in order for you to make that decision. I have to give a shout-out to him; he actually came out and saw it. The investment came through. The repairs were done just recently.

Those are just a couple of examples, and I do have other examples where I've worked with my colleagues

from the opposition party and with the government. But there are other opportunities where that invitation didn't come through, to my friend who is smiling, who will remain nameless right now.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Not Arthur Potts.

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, no. You don't say that.

Il est venu à l'île Manitoulin, et puis il y a eu une annonce sur l'agriculture, dans l'aquaculture. Quand il est venu, l'annonce s'est faite, mais c'est bizarre que la journée où ça a été annoncé—j'ai été notifié, monsieur le Président, mais j'ai été notifié la soirée d'avant à 10 h 30 du soir. C'est un petit peu difficile de se rendre à l'annonce qui est à 9 h le lendemain matin.

Ça fait qu'il y a des fois où on peut travailler ensemble. Je comprends parfaitement que ce que le membre demande, c'est qu'il y ait une appréciation, surtout dans les annonces qu'on partage, qu'on fasse certain que ceci est fait pour le public. Ce n'est pas pour le parti. Ce n'est pas pour une position. C'est vraiment pour les gens qui ont fait l'effort, qui ont rempli les demandes, qui ont fait le projet, qui ont étudié et ont fait les études et puis qui ont surtout mis l'ouvrage.

Pour nous, c'est facile. On arrive, on prend la photo, c'est fini, et on part. Mais c'est pour les autres gens qui participent et qui travaillent avec tellement de ténacité pour faire certain que les besoins de leur communauté sont rendus, et il faut qu'on respecte ça. À la fin de la journée, c'est pour le public.

In saying that, at the end of the day, it is a public announcement. It's not gamesmanship; it's not partisanship. What the member's motion here is asking is to consider that he and others are all there—that this is for the public good of everybody, and consideration should be done for everyone so that everyone can benefit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge, and for those watching at home—I know Bev and John are watching, and my son Declan, who's home from school sick today. So what does he want to do? He wants to see his mother. This is a way to do it. I hope he's feeling better soon.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of being a government that is investing so much in infrastructure across this great province of ours. The government's infrastructure spending is based on formulas to ensure fairness, and I think the member from Perth-Wellington knows that. In fact, no member of this House would need to look very hard to find examples of infrastructure investments made in every single part of this province.

If the member for Perth-Wellington wanted to tally up lists of examples, I'm sure he'd find that opposition-held ridings are seeing considerable investment under this government. It's interesting that he and several other members across the way have used the word "punish." It was a word that I heard in Cambridge for a few years while the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion did not go ahead. I worked at the institution. I knew what

was happening behind the scenes. Mr. Speaker, many people out in the community used to say the Liberal government was punishing Cambridge for being an unheld riding in not going forward. In fact, because the hospital unfortunately had to go under supervision, all of their expansion plans had to go off the rails for a while until a new administrator was found. They were able to come forward with plans that could be supported, and the Cambridge Memorial Hospital went ahead.

When I was answering those people in the community—and this is before I was elected, Speaker—I would say, “Well, what about Woodstock?” They would say, “What do you mean, ‘What about Woodstock?’” I said, “They built a new hospital in Woodstock, an unheld riding, and it opened in 2011.” No punishment here; it was just the circumstances of those very, very individual communities.

Last week, I went to Pelham in the riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook to cut a ribbon with the mayor—he actually stopped to kick the tires on the new transit bus—to be part of the MTO’s Community Transportation Pilot Grant. That community successfully got one of the pilot grants and started a bus transit in that pilot project. That is certainly an unheld riding.

This summer, I went to many government announcements to help show our infrastructure investments in communities such as Leamington and Sarnia—and the member from Sarnia–Lambton was at that very happy announcement—Mount Forest and Woodstock. There were a number of different announcements that I was able to make throughout unheld ridings in the southwest—and definitely, those communities are not being punished by any stretch; they are actually fitting into the formula that Ontario has provided to ensure fairness for a number of different communities across here—funding announcement calls that I’ve done for the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and other ministry programs all over the southwest region.

In fact, 88% of the Ontario community infrastructure projects are in ridings held by members of opposition parties; 79% of those municipalities that receive funding have a population under 15,000, 65% have a population under 10,000 and 42% have a population under 5,000. I would challenge the members of the opposition: When they hear that some of the funding is coming to their municipalities, instead of complaining about it, I’d love to hear a thank you. Their mayors and their communities are asking for that.

Another great example of the fairness we’ve been talking about, of ensuring we’re investing and making a real difference across our whole province, is the Small Communities Fund. We launched it as part of the Building Canada Fund, the first province in Canada to do so. Through that, we’ve provided \$272 million that’s matched by our federal government, to support projects in municipalities with populations of fewer than 100,000.

Here’s the thing, Mr. Speaker: Of the 86 projects we’ve nominated for federal approval through the Small Communities Fund, 39 are in PC ridings and 27 are in

NDP ridings, which means 66 projects out of 86 are in opposition ridings. Our government understands that strong leadership means tackling our transit and infrastructure challenges in all.

I’ll close by saying that the member from Perth–Wellington can’t criticize us for making infrastructure investments, vote against the budget that contains them and then come to cut the ribbon at these announcements. I challenge him to decide what side of the fence he’d like to be on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on this timely motion to guarantee that all ridings be given equal and transparent consideration on infrastructure funding and that MPPs, whether in government or in opposition, be given fair and equal advance notice of that official announcement. It will be that call for equal advance notice on which I will be focusing most of my remarks today.

It’s unfortunate that the member for Perth–Wellington should even have to bring forth a motion like this, as guarantees for fair, equal consideration should go without saying in the democratic system we work in here in Ontario, a system built to uphold the principles of government by the people. In the end, it’s about the people, and when government fails to behave fairly and equitably to all the people it’s elected to represent, then government is not doing the job it was elected to do.

I said it should go without saying, it should be a given; but, unfortunately, as we’ve seen time and again with the current regime, fair and equal consideration is continually ignored in favour of partisan behaviour that really falls well short of the principles we were all elected to uphold. The sad fact is that this government has become so arrogant and out of touch that they actually believe, when they hand out cheques, it’s their money to do with as they please, to shower over government ridings while only loosening the tap to drip onto opposition ridings when it suits their partisan needs, all the while doing their best to freeze out the local member in the process.

1510

Last week I informed the Legislature that I was writing the Integrity Commissioner following the most recent example of government arrogance and partisan promotion in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I requested an investigation into the use of a September 1 private, invite-only Ontario government, taxpayer funding announcement in St. Jacobs by the member from Kitchener Centre and the Minister of Agriculture as a platform to promote the Kitchener Centre federal Liberal candidate, Raj Saini.

Given the commissioner’s August 11 email to all MPPs relating to federal election participation, that “government resources should not be used for partisan purposes,” I was very surprised to see the federal candidate at the private, provincial taxpayer funding announcement, alongside the provincial Liberal members. Heck, I was surprised about the entire event itself, because in

contrast to the focus of today's motion, far from being given fair and equal advance notice of the official announcement, I was only informed of the 9:15 a.m. event in a quick email to my constituency office inbox at 8:51 p.m. the previous evening.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

If some members don't hear me, I'll stand up, so that you can hear me. The next call will be a warning.

Carry on.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll repeat: I was only informed of the 9:15 a.m. event in a quick email to my constituency inbox at 8:51 p.m. the previous evening, obviously well after my constituency office had closed, titled "Event FYIs." It just so happened that I was in the area for an earlier public event in St. Jacobs that morning, and luckily my constituency office was quick to notify me of the late-hour notice that we had received in time for me to be a part of the taxpayer funding announcement for a business in my riding.

You see, without the guarantees that this motion calls for, these are the games these guys have played and will continue to play and get away with, because no one calls them out. Well, it has gone too far, too long, and they can't just keep using our resources to disrespect the democratic principles they are here to uphold.

Even worse, when I did call them out for their partisan game-playing, the member for Kitchener Centre tried to play the announcement off as a public event, which even the grant recipient told reporters it was not. Worse than that, the member then tried to say I was invited to the event as a goodwill gesture. Twelve hours before an event that her federal Liberal friend was obviously well prepared for, I get an evening email to my constituency office marked "Event FYIs" for a taxpayer funding announcement to a company in my riding, and she calls that a gesture of goodwill? No.

First of all, there was no goodwill about it. The late nature of notice was clearly intended to ensure that I was unable to attend. Second of all, this is a riding I represent. These are the people, no matter what political stripe, who I represent. In a democratic system of government, the elected representative, on behalf of his or her Ontario taxpayers, deserves to be given fair and equal advance notice of an official announcement. It's as simple as that, and yet this government fails to grasp this simple concept.

Goodwill has nothing to do with it, nor should it. When government makes investments into companies, they are doing it on behalf of everyone in the province and, more specifically, in the area riding. That's a slap in the face of everyone in that riding, to play games in refusing fair and equal advance notice of official announcements.

But again, this is nothing new for this bunch. There is a long and storied history of differing sets of rules being applied to funding announcements and infrastructure funding itself, as this motion speaks to.

Let's take a look at the wide array of transit announcements this government loves to repeat. For years now, we've had to watch as the Wynne Liberals pick winners and losers when it comes to the LRT funding. For instance, some municipalities get full funding, like Mississauga, Brampton, and now Hamilton; some, like us in my region of Waterloo, only get partial funding.

Brampton, Mississauga and Hamilton are getting 100% full funding for their LRT; they have no skin in the game. And yet, in Waterloo we had to watch as the same government's original commitment for two-thirds funding was slashed to only a third, leaving Waterloo region municipal taxpayers to pick up the province's shortfalls. As I said at the time of the Brampton and Mississauga announcements, I guess, as the old country song goes, "They got the gold mine, and we got the shaft."

As we heard from my Perth-Wellington colleague, everyone pays taxes and should receive a similar quality of infrastructure and services, regardless of whose riding they live in. Provincial infrastructure decisions should be based on merit—full stop. Basing the use of taxpayers' money on politics only further leads us down the rabbit hole toward more gas plant fiascos that cost us all while one party achieves their goals of partisan gain. It's wrong. It has got to stop—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Perth-Wellington, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank all members who addressed this motion today—from Windsor-Tecumseh, Trinity-Spadina, Wellington-Halton Hills, Algoma-Manitoulin, Cambridge and Kitchener-Conestoga.

If anything, this motion has started the debate. I think that if the government will take the opportunity here, they have the opportunity to make this system better. There are 115 municipalities right now—and we're still getting emails from them—that don't agree that this system is working.

Gary McNamara had issues at AMO—you were all there; you heard this. I think if you take anything out of this motion, you'll support it because it gives you an opportunity to make the process better. That's all this motion is doing right now. Both members of the NDP certainly understand the need for this to happen. This is certainly not about partisan politics—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is so.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's certainly not about partisan politics because—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: No. I am not making these stories up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to address the Chair.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Sorry.

I am not making these stories up, Speaker. These are stories that come into our office. These are things that happened in my riding and in other ridings. But, if they

sit there on the defensive of these things all the time, they're never going to solve them, they've never going to make the system work better. That's all we're asking them to look at. That's all the municipalities that have written to me want to happen: to make the process fair as far as funding decisions.

Certainly, we all worked as hard as each other to get elected to this House. Because we're sitting in opposition, we should not be excluded from funding announcements in our ridings. That's just simply not fair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' public business.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD LITERACY SENSIBILISATION À L'AGRICULTURE ET AUX PRODUITS AGRICOLES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy by ensuring that the Ministry of Education includes a mandatory component of career opportunities associated with Ontario's agri-food industry in the grades 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member's notice of motion number 14. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I would like to start my comments off by commending my good friends and neighbours the MPP for Perth–Wellington and the MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on their thoughtful and relevant PMBs they shared with this House this afternoon. I know first-hand how committed they are to their constituents and how committed they are to holding this government to account. I thank them for that.

In the spirit of the Blue Jays, I can't help but remark on the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's haircut. Clearly, he idolizes Josh Donaldson. That would make the member for Perth–Wellington Bautista. I guess, this afternoon, I have the opportunity and honour of being Encarnacion. I'll be the cleanup hitter this afternoon. We're going to hit it out of the park with this one.

So, with that, I want to talk about a very important element that I have been committed to my entire career. After University of Guelph, I worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, after which I became general manager for the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative. That co-operative allowed me the opportunity to realize and continue my support for an organization called Ontario Agri-Food Education. This is an organization that has been around for a number of years—in fact, it evolved out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Next year, in 2016, it will be celebrating its 25th anniversary. That anniversary is going to be special, because for 25 years they've worked hard to ensure that teachers who are interested in teaching about

agriculture in the classroom, from primary through to the senior high school years, had the proper curriculum to base their teachings on.

1520

But we need to do better, and my motion is very, very important—I'll get to that in a second—because while some might say that agriculture in the classroom is already happening, I disagree with that. I have to tell you that it isn't happening consistently throughout the province. My motion is very specifically about ensuring that every single grade 9 and 10 student in Ontario is aware of the amazing job opportunities that they may want to consider.

Food production, meaning farming, computer science, research and technology, food science, marketing, processing and mechanical engineering, which are just a few of the careers—I could go on; the list is truly endless. But what I really want to share is that this list, which is endless, underscores the importance of young people being aware, because I can tell you that we know the agri-food industry is an industry where there are jobs without people. We've known this for some time. In fact, I'm sure some of the members throughout the entire House will recall a few years ago when a report came out from the University of Guelph that stated for every new grad there were three or four jobs waiting for them. Clearly, there's a gap here.

My motion today, which has been strongly supported throughout the agri-food industry, is about closing that gap. My motion today is about all of us here in this House, all 107 members, working together so we can help the Premier realize a goal that she had.

When the Premier was Minister of Agriculture and Food a couple of years ago, she challenged the agri-food industry to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. It's an aspiring goal, because we know this government likes to have aspirational goals—but we won't talk about neonics today. We want to talk about helping the Premier close that gap and help people realize that there are amazing jobs out there. But they'll only realize that if it's made mandatory to teach about the amazing agri-food careers in the grades 9 and 10 career and guidance curriculum.

I want to take a moment and reflect on some of the support that I've received over the last six months since I first introduced this motion during Local Food Week in June. For instance, Robert Gordon, the dean of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph, said this motion “will support an improved level of awareness of the sector and the huge and growing opportunities that exist within.”

Colleen Smith, executive director for Ontario Agri-Food Education, said, “OAFE is committed to supporting the economic success of the agri-food industry in Ontario by helping students understand trends and themes occurring in the sector while at the same time motivate them to explore the diverse career opportunities that exist.”

James Rilett, vice-president of Restaurants Canada, said, “Today's consumers want to know where their food

comes from, but they also want to know about the process. This understanding needs to start earlier. Including agriculture and food education in the Ontario curriculum is a great place to start.”

Don McCabe—whom we all know and love in this House—president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, “OFA supports this initiative ... recognizing the importance of helping youth learn of the varied and growing opportunities available in the agri-food sector.”

Mark Brock, chair of Grain Farmers of Ontario, said, “Educating youth on the wide range of career choices that exist will help fill the gap the agriculture industry is currently facing.”

Jim Goetz, president of the Canadian Beverage Association, went on to say, “To encourage more young people to get involved and excited about the agri-food sector is beneficial for local communities and all Ontarians.” CBA supports “any future opportunities to promote growing this important sector of our economy and make Ontario a leader within Canada’s agri-food industry.”

Last but not least, Plamen Petkov, of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said, “Adding agri-food education to the curriculum will allow younger generations to understand the options that are available to them.”

That’s really what this is about. This isn’t about voluntarily having cute little segments about agriculture in the classroom. This is about making students absolutely, positively excited and aware of their future job opportunities.

I share that, Speaker, because it’s important to recognize the significance that the agri-food sector has here alone in the GTHA. In December 2013, the city of Toronto announced that there were 1,149 food and beverage manufacturing establishments, employing over 51,000 people. They also went on to say:

“Within Ontario, Toronto dominates the provincial food industry with more than half of all the food processing in the province taking place within the greater Toronto region.

“About 47.2% of Ontario’s employment in the food and beverage sector was in Toronto.... The total annual sales ... were estimated to be \$16.9 billion or 47.2% of Ontario’s annual sales of \$35.81 billion in 2011.”

Speaker, this is a huge industry, and we can’t afford to have good-paying jobs going without people recognizing an opportunity that lies there. I share that because, in speaking to people from Conestoga College, who have a wonderful foodservice program, they shared their dismay with me because they can’t fill the seats that they have dedicated towards food science. They don’t have enough students aware and interested in applying. When we want our young people to stay in Ontario, when we want our young people to grow their families in Ontario, we need to ensure that they understand the viable opportunities that exist right here in Ontario as well.

As I mentioned before, the whole concept of agriculture in the classroom has been around for quite some

time. Again, I’ve dedicated my entire career to ensuring that young people have an appreciation of agriculture but, more importantly, understand the future that allows this province to feel good about keeping our young people here in this province.

It’s about economics, and we all know that the agri-food sector in Ontario is, some would say, second-largest to the automotive industry. But, as the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture points out, you can’t eat a car. So the agri-food industry is incredibly important to this province.

I also want to share with you that teachers need to be comfortable in teaching agricultural content. My understanding is that the Minister of Education earlier today said, “This is already happening in Ontario.” Well, Speaker, the fact of the matter is, there are some areas of Ontario, primarily rural Ontario, that do, indeed, have high-skills major programs focusing on primary agriculture, which is excellent.

But we have to do better. All Ontarians need to be aware of the opportunities, and we need to grow awareness about jobs in the agri-food sector. OAFE is the perfect partner. OAFE is an organization that has ex officios from both the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Education at the board table, helping guide them in the right direction, so every effort and every investment made in the curriculum is a fit.

They also—“they” being OAFE—have an amazing program known as teacher ambassadors. So while there might be some teachers not comfortable with teaching content that they’re not familiar with, OAFE is there to support these teachers with their ambassadors. It’s a great program where young teachers who may not be able to get a full-time job or get on a supply list have an opportunity to hone their skills as teacher ambassadors and build up their tool box, all the while promoting the agri-food sector. I think this is just an amazing program that enables my motion to transcend into the Ministry of Education in a very smooth manner, and I’ll explain that just as I close.

My motion is not about a new spend; it’s not about creating something new. This motion is about realizing what we already have at our disposal. We have an amazing not-for-profit organization that will be celebrating its 25th anniversary next year, and we can couple that with a curriculum that’s already in place by embedding agri-food careers into grade 9 and 10 curriculum. This is a win for everyone, and hopefully, by 2020, the agri-food sector will have created 120,000 new jobs.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It’s my honour to rise and add to the discussion on private member’s motion 14, on agri-food being added to the educational curriculum, from the member for Huron–Bruce. I think it’s a great motion, actually, and I’m certainly going to support it. I only have about three or four minutes, so I’m just going to

focus on the importance of agri-food jobs in my own riding of Welland and across Niagara.

In fact, as a teenager, many, many years ago when I was 15 or 16, I spent my summers working in the canning factories in Niagara-on-the-Lake, at Bick's pickles in the Dunnville area. It provided a lot of jobs for youth. It wasn't a pretty job. It was a very tiring job, where you're on an assembly line, processing peaches, plums, pickles or whatever. But it certainly taught you the importance of getting a good education and moving on to something else in your life if you didn't want to be doing that every year, over the seasonal operation.

In my own riding, I attended a ribbon cutting for Niagara Peninsula Homes. Now, you'll wonder what the connection is with agri-foods, but Niagara Peninsula Homes, which has been in operation for many, many years and manages and operates co-op housing and some non-profit housing across the Niagara region, also has what is called the Niagara Women's Enterprise Centre and Niagara Presents. Niagara Presents actually has a business that sees women who maybe have fled their homes because of violence or they've emigrated from another country without a lot of educational skills. They work with farmers and produce all kinds of products in conjunction with Vineland's Cherry Lane. They use a Niagara Presents label, and they sell these products. They make gift baskets with preserves and different sauces and things they've made, and the money they raise is used for other enterprises for women.

In addition to doing that, Niagara Peninsula Homes does a property and maintenance co-op program. They provide housing support and property management. Most recently, they actually have a teen energy program where they take youth at risk and put them through their program. This group was actually responsible for renovating this new building, which was an old historic building in the city, and they now have all their programs under one roof.

I would be remiss if I didn't speak about our wine industry, which certainly falls under this bill. Certainly we're very proud of our wine industry in Niagara. It's hard to keep track of the number of wineries we have, because some of them have merged. Sometimes there are almost 200, and then the numbers may reduce as the wineries group together. But certainly the wine industry has produced hundreds of jobs for people in Niagara.

The research station in Vineland, in the riding of the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, Mr. Hudak, was created about 15 years ago to bring together grape growers, the federal and provincial ministries, the University of Guelph, Brock University and Niagara College: all those people who were starting to delve into winemaking and the training of winemakers. It, in fact, has created its own set of workers with value-added jobs in the whole research piece.

I think this bill is very important. As I said, I'm going to support it, and I look forward to the end result here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member from Huron—Bruce for bringing this forward. I would also like to thank the member from Welland for her contribution to the debate.

I am thrilled to be speaking to this motion as I must say that I am very supportive of its goals, having lived and grown up all my life around agriculture in my lovely riding of Durham.

I was just talking to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as part of Agriculture Week about this very topic. I always ask how we can better engage the public, especially young people, on the potential for them in agriculture.

We also got a splendid showcase of the diversity of the agri-food sector at Glengarry—Prescott—Russell day just yesterday right here in this Legislature.

In Durham, we have a vibrant and varied agricultural sector. Businesses both directly and indirectly related to agriculture make up a large part of our local economy, so I've had the great pleasure, since being elected, to be a touring guest on many of these farms and facilities. We have a lovely facility in Newcastle that produces a number of things—the best cider you can find anywhere. It's right there in Durham.

Family farms are a cornerstone of our lives here in Durham and also in Ontario in general, and they're incredible economic citizens locally, provincially and internationally.

What they want young people to know is that the tools and approaches to agriculture that they employ come from very diverse fields of study. Agriculture is truly a modern and constantly advancing industry, and promoting that message is key to sustainability.

Genetics and biology, chemistry, physics and engineering: The sciences are very heavily engaged in the agricultural sector, working towards bio-durability of crops and livestock, sustainability of agricultural practices and much, much more.

The social sciences are vital as well, with agricultural economics, labour relations, communications and beyond. You can name almost any field of study, and chances are it has a significant relationship with agriculture.

I think it's highly important that students are given the chance to see the opportunities before them, and that is why I think this motion is worth debating.

I recently held an agricultural round table in Nestleton which was well attended. We had over 40 people from the agricultural sector in attendance—Nestleton is in the heart of our farming community—and we invited representatives from across the agricultural sector. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear their comments and concerns, and part of those comments were how we can engage young people to become involved on the family farm.

This was a wonderful opportunity to hear their comments and to try to address their comments as best as I could by contacting the local college, which is Durham College, and asking about programs and the possibility of

having programs in that community that would enhance the agricultural sector.

I certainly hear about educating youth about opportunities in the field, but I also hear about the importance of food literacy and the impact that students make as consumers and local stewards in their communities.

I am very supportive of having agriculture in careers classes in our high schools, and I think our government has already done quite a good job of giving schools the tools to spread this message.

Our existing curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for students to learn about agriculture and food processing, and we have implemented the Local Food Act and encouraged 26 specialist high-skills majors in agriculture, but I think there's always potential to go beyond.

Ontarians should know what sort of choices they are making when they go to the grocery store and where their food is coming from. They need to be encouraged to ask about the journey their food has taken, the good people who have been involved in that process and how it affects their health and well-being.

1540

Agriculture in Ontario helps to combat food insecurity and inequity, and these topics should be encouraged for discussion. I think our government is doing an excellent job of advocating for more agricultural education, but for me, the sky certainly is the limit.

Where we are in Durham is, like many parts of Ontario, a mix of urban and rural. The boundary brings agricultural activities almost to the subdivision fences. Having programs like this in the classrooms shows Ontarian students that their relationship with farmers and agriculture doesn't end at the fence. It has the impact of promoting greater understanding of normal farm practices and creating greater harmony and civic knowledge.

I feel very strongly that there is a need to make agriculture a larger part of students' education in this province, and that's why I am pleased to be supporting this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Patrick Brown: It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of the bill put forward by the member for Huron-Bruce. Let me congratulate the member for Huron-Bruce for her hard work on this bill. I think it says a lot about her passion.

The fact that we heard earlier today the Minister of Agriculture express his support for the bill, and just now the member for Welland and the member for Durham all speaking about why this is a necessary step, and the fact that you're seeing united cross-partisan support, really highlight the quality of this bill and, from a personal note, how lucky I feel to have the member for Huron-Bruce in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus.

Ontario's farming origins are a huge part of our rich history. Agriculture in our province is not just a romantic idea of the past, but very much of central importance to

our province's future. Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$34 billion annually to Ontario's GDP and supports upwards of three quarters of a million jobs.

Unfortunately, the agri-food industry continues to have a low profile in the job market. Despite the challenge to the sector that the Premier made herself, when she was the Minister of Agriculture, to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020, we're obviously not there yet, and there is much work to do.

Each graduate from an agriculture degree program in this province today has approximately three ag-related jobs available to him or her upon graduation. This bill supports providing students an improved level of awareness of the sector and employment opportunities that exist. Properly educating Ontario's youth on the array of career choices can only help fill the gaps. I have spoken many times across the province about the need to better link education to employment, and this is an example of the type of sector where that would be so helpful.

This bill will also help reinvigorate a sector understandably frustrated in recent years. A January 2015 survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business noted that 35% of farmers are discouraging their own children from carrying on the family farming business, mainly because of the endless red tape and regulation. This bill is an opportunity to highlight the opportunities that exist and how we all hope to make this sector great again.

Adding agri-food education to the syllabus will help students make educated decisions about their future if they choose the agri-food industry. This foundation will better equip them to navigate the system in the future.

I recall when I was young, prior to the age of 10, my family had a farm just outside of Midland. I remember speaking to neighbours; you remember things differently when you're a child, but I remember very distinctly that there was pride. There was pride in farming. What I love about this bill is that it raises those possibilities to students. It raises those possibilities to young people and helps bring back an enhanced pride in the agriculture sector.

Ontario is home to some of the best farmland in Canada, and we should celebrate that. We should celebrate the opportunities that exist, and that the people involved in this sector are some of the hardest-working people you could ever imagine. The Ontario PC caucus understands and supports our farmers. Cultivating a new and enthusiastic generation of agriculture will grow our economy, feed our cities and keep our families together, and carry on one of Ontario's finest traditions.

Today's consumers also want to know where their food comes from, and want to know about the process. This understanding needs to start earlier. Including agriculture and food education in classrooms would be a great catalyst for this earlier start and for building a foundation of knowledge with young people.

The OFA agrees greater education targeting young students is needed and is very important. Actually, this bill dovetails well with their lobbying efforts. The OFA

is launching their own food literacy program, Six by Sixteen, to help guide young people to plan and learn and prepare six healthy meals by the age of 16. When I met with members of the OFA executive earlier this week, I talked about the member for Huron–Bruce's bill, and they enthusiastically thought it was a great initiative.

So I just wanted to say very briefly today why this is a great bill and why this would be of benefit to Ontario. I would encourage all members in the House to support it, but I'd really encourage the government to take the spirit of this bill and make sure that we add it to the school curriculum as soon as possible, and hopefully as soon as next year, because this is a step forward for Ontario.

I thank the member for Huron–Bruce for putting all of her hard work and efforts into this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M. Michael Mantha: C'est tout un plaisir de porter parole des gens d'Algoma–Manitoulin et d'offrir mes commentaires au débat.

Je veux féliciter ma collègue et aussi la souhaiter un bon anniversaire pour sa quatrième année. Elle est une amie. On a participé ensemble—nous sommes venus comme députés ici à Queen's Park en 2011. Avec elle aussi, comme plusieurs de ses collègues, on a eu ce moment-là où on a appris à travailler ensemble, avec mes collègues de notre caucus, de leur caucus et du gouvernement.

Ce qu'elle propose aujourd'hui dans sa motion, que « the government should recognize the importance of agriculture and food literacy by ensuring that the Ministry of Education includes a mandatory component of career opportunities associated with Ontario's agri-food industry in the grades 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum », c'est une motion fantastique, et on devrait en avoir plus, pour donner la chance à nos enfants, premièrement, d'avoir une discussion sur l'agriculture, mais aussi, pendant qu'ils sont là, qu'on fasse certain qu'ils peuvent voir le futur et que le futur va être là avec beaucoup de soutien : qu'ils vont avoir les outils, qu'ils vont avoir une chance à avoir une carrière, et puis que l'éducation va être là pour les aider dans l'avancement de l'agriculture. Si tu n'as pas une vision, si tu ne vois pas une façon que tu vas faire ta vie, si tu n'as pas un rêve d'accomplir une tâche où ça va te revenir, où ça va te faire sentir une personne et te donner la fierté, te donner la chance de participer à une communauté et à aider ton voisin, c'est difficile à offrir cet outil-là à un enfant ou lui donner la vision que « Oui, il y a un potentiel dans l'agriculture. »

Encore, je veux féliciter ma copine pour avoir apporté cette motion. C'est important, pour qu'un enfant ait la chance de dire, « Tu sais, je vois des options dans l'agriculture et je vois une chance où je peux aller et où je vais me faire soutenir par des collègues. Je vais avoir la chance d'élever une famille. Je vais avoir la chance de vraiment avoir une carrière. » Ici, en Ontario, on regarde à tous les défis que le secteur d'agriculture a présentement, et eux autres se tiennent ensemble pour

répondre aux questions et répondre aux besoins. Puis ils regardent à nous ici, comme des représentants, des députés, pour les aider. Ils ne demandent pas de l'aide, ils ne demandent pas tout le temps des ressources, ils ne demandent pas tout le temps la réponse. Mais si on écoute juste un peu et on leur donne les outils, on va se trouver avec un avantage, surtout dans le secteur agricole. C'est la base de ce qu'on a ici en Ontario. C'est eux qui nous portent de jour en jour. C'est eux qui sont la plus grosse industrie ici en Ontario. Il ne faut pas qu'on se trompe de ça.

Pour donner la chance à nos enfants, il faut qu'ils soient capables de voir que, premièrement, il y a les outils, il y a la chance d'avoir une carrière, et puis aussi, qu'il y a l'éducation qui va être là pour les aider à travers leur choix de vie. Merci.

1550

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's a pleasure to rise in my place today and speak to this very important motion. I want to thank the member for Huron–Bruce for raising it. One of the great things about participating in these debates is that you get to know a little bit about members on the opposite side. I didn't know the member went to Guelph, and obviously her passion for agri-food is really clear. I want to thank her for putting this motion forward. I support it and I think it's a great idea and so welcome. Thank you so much for bringing this forward for discussion today.

I'd like to join my colleagues from Welland, Durham, Simcoe North and Algoma–Manitoulin in having this important conversation. It comes on the eve of Thanksgiving, which is a time for all of us to celebrate the bounty of our province and all it has to offer and to thank the hands that grew the food and the hands that brought it to our table. I think it's very fitting that the member puts forward this motion today for this conversation.

I want to join my colleague from Durham in terms of talking about the work that we've done to support our agricultural sector. In his comments, he talked about our curriculum. I think it's important to note as well that the member, in bringing this motion forward today, raises some really important issues. We're doing some great things—I'm going to talk about them in a moment—but it doesn't mean that we can't do better. Thank you for raising this conversation.

We are committed to reviewing and maintaining our world-class curriculum and will continue to consult with Ontario's food and agriculture industry as we do so.

On the topic of food literacy, if I may, I want to speak about our government's first annual Local Food Report, a document we released this past June that provides a baseline and demonstrates our progress in terms of enhancing awareness and demand for food that is grown, harvested and made in Ontario. Within this report is a section on food literacy. The section provides an overview of the food literacy goals that our government established in consultation with stakeholders. They

include such things as increasing the number of Ontarians who know what local foods are available and who know how and where to obtain them.

In my riding of Burlington, one organization comes to mind that is doing great work in this arena. The Halton Food Council is an independent, volunteer-based non-profit organization that represents a broad range of sectors and interests across the food system in Halton region. The council's mission is to promote and support a sustainable local food system and to inspire people into action. By encouraging and facilitating dialogue and collaboration amongst organizations, agencies, services, food producers and distributors, consumers, business and government alike, the council works to develop strategies to help it realize its vision of a fair and sustainable food system where local foods are available and promoted, local agricultural lands and farmers are protected and supported, urban agriculture is encouraged, and food has been produced and distributed in an environmentally responsible way.

Their vision also includes a region where all residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. The council and its volunteers help to support the entire food system, including food production, processing, distribution etc., including waste management, also a very important component of their work.

They support local producers by promoting local farmers' markets and providing resources for residents on where to buy locally grown food.

The Halton Food Council also works with residents to teach them how to grow their own food and has launched a community garden initiative. In so doing, they are helping individuals and local organizations in our region realize a more sustainable food system while helping to reach our government's greater food literacy goals.

By increasing food literacy for all Ontarians, we create an environment that will, of its own accord, create interest in agricultural sector careers and employment. When people and communities are more aware of and can greater appreciate any particular sector or industry, they are more likely to encourage one other and their children to pursue careers within it, especially when that sector is expected to grow.

The Local Food Report, along with the Local Food Fund and the annual Local Food Week, are part of our government's strategy to grow Ontario's agri-food sector.

Our government knows that supporting food grown and harvested and made in Ontario creates jobs and economic growth in communities right across our province.

As the saying goes, "Good Things Grow in Ontario."

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sing it.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: "Good Things Grow in Ontario." There you go. My mother would be proud.

In Burlington, we're a mid-sized city, with many local food producers just beyond our northern border. But within our community, we have several food processors, and one of those is Sofina Foods. Sofina is a fresh pork processing company and Burlington's second-largest em-

ployer. On any given shift, you will find 850 employees in the Sofina plant. They have an exceptionally diverse workforce, with professional opportunities across many functions of the business. This operation and many like it are growing and expanding, and with this comes the creation of new jobs and opportunities for young people to get a great start in a rewarding career.

The modern agricultural industry now offers a wide array of career opportunities, many of which did not exist even 20 years ago. Young Ontarians can now pursue a future in careers like plant and animal genetics and health, microbiology and biotechnology, or food science and agricultural engineering, to name a few.

Ontario's future workforce may often be unaware of the many high-paying, skilled career opportunities presented by the agri-food sector, and so the responsibility falls in part to us to make sure that they hear about them. We are continuing to increase opportunities across the province for students to learn about jobs in Ontario's agri-food industry, including 26 specialist high-skills majors in agriculture and food processing. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Durham mentioned these.

I want to close in thanking the member opposite for raising this incredibly important issue, and I look forward to the further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: This motion is, I feel, really quite important. As our member from Huron-Bruce has explained, an agri-food curriculum really is a proven way to introduce ideas and information, in this case to high school students, exposing them to farming, food and agri-business as a career choice, in this case by wedging ag into the existing careers curriculum.

I have always felt that ag education is good news. It's something I learned growing up on our farms. I studied agriculture in high school for four years; it was a full-blown course back at the time. I studied at the University of Guelph, did an MSc at the agricultural college, and I was fortunate to come back to a Simcoe county school and teach the agriculture program to grades 9, 10, 11 and 12—a 4-year or 5-year stream. It was a full-blown, year-long course for our students. Vestiges of this remain as a specialist high school major in agriculture, but not in enough schools, really.

In the curriculum I taught, we ran a 50-foot greenhouse and we had a chicken barn. Of course, to maintain that as a high school teacher, you're there until 5 o'clock every day with the students. That provided a lot of opportunities to kick around ideas, as well, after 3:30. Many of my schoolmates and many of my students picked up farming as a career; they took over the family farm, or they bought one, and worked hard. They did well in spite of some of the obstacles, and many of those obstacles are mitigated by ongoing education, ongoing extension—something that's also very important.

When we hear words like agri-food and ag literacy, oftentimes we think of farming alone, or segments of agriculture, and it really does encompass everything from

farm gate to plate—the whole journey, really, and beyond, into manufacturing and retail.

As far as careers, many of my students were from town. They get out of high school, and maybe for their first job they're pumping gas. Most of their customers were farmers—farm trucks, diesel, delivering fuel to farms, tractors. Maybe they're involved in construction. Again, there's electrical and plumbing—their customers are farmers, and they could communicate the business of agriculture.

I really feel we would do well, as with this motion, to re-evaluate what we're offering in our school system and to take a look at our school system through a rural lens. It's a bit of a sad state of affairs that today's curriculum really doesn't contain much with respect to traditional agriculture or traditional home economics, let alone present and future approaches to agriculture. It's very important across Canada. Some 8% of our gross domestic product is driven by agri-business; 8% of the value of all Canadian goods comes from the system, and that comes in at about a \$100-billion contribution every year, nationally.

There is an abundance of careers in a variety of fields, not just "out in the field": marketing, food science, research, development, plant and animal genetics, plant and animal biotechnology, microbiology, financial services, ecology—much of the ag course curriculum morphed into the environmental science program in the early 1970s; advertising and government work, because the odd farmer gets elected as an MPP. So there is a future in the business in one way or another.

1600

Much of the business continues to boom, in spite of the odds, and 12% of Canada's employment—out of 2.1 million people, there's a little over 300,000 people involved in just primary agriculture alone, whether it's in a greenhouse, a tree nursery or working on the farm. But there's a tremendous gap, a tremendous need for workers, as we know.

I appreciate the support from all members of the House—this is quite heartening—and support from so many organizations. I'd like to quote an organization called Sustain Ontario: "Making food literacy part of the mainstream school curriculum is supported by 95% of Ontarians." Those changes would provide students with "the necessary skills to make healthy food choices and increase their self-efficacy to prepare nutritious meals for themselves."

MPP Patrick Brown made mention of the OFA. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture launched a program, Six by Sixteen, with the tagline, "We're serving up food literacy." I know President Don McCabe is in the House today. There's a website. You can go to sixbysixteen.me to learn more about this program. The plan is that by age 16, young people would have the ability to prepare, at minimum, six nutritious, comprehensive meals. There's a website and there's an extensive library of resources, videos, recipes, all kinds of advice.

CropLife Canada: Here's another organization. It's a supporter of what they call Agriculture in the Classroom Canada. I've gone through their material. They have a terrific interactive website. They have set up a non-profit spinoff organization to push the knowledge and the understanding, again, focusing on grades 7 to 12.

I fully support this. I saw how it worked through the 1960s and 1970s. It's the way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be here today to speak to the motion from the member from Huron-Bruce. I fully support it, and I think everyone here should have a medal because there are a lot of other places they would rather be today.

It's 0-0 in the top of the second, folks.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you.

Mr. John Vanthof: You're welcome.

For those of you who didn't have instantaneous translation for the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I'm going to do exactly the same speech, or close to it.

All jokes aside, this is a very important motion. We're very proud to support it. Agriculture is the cornerstone of this province. It's the cornerstone of our society. A lot of people don't appreciate how important it is, but even more people don't appreciate how wide a variety of highly skilled jobs are in it. I think that's one of the things that this motion is really looking to direct.

There is a high degree of food illiteracy in this province, and that's a problem in itself. But there's also a high degree of agriculture job illiteracy. This motion speaks to that in spades.

One of the reasons that I quit milking cows—quit dairy farming—is that I couldn't find someone to manage my dairy farm while I was here. There is a demand for that. There is a huge demand for highly skilled jobs.

I have two kids. Right now one is working full-time in the agriculture field; the other one soon will be. They're not on our dairy farm or on our cash crop farm, but both will have highly paid, highly skilled jobs in agriculture, and that's something we have to expose more children, more students and more young people to.

Agriculture is a very fast-growing, fast-paced industry. A lot of people don't realize that and we have to expose more people to that. I'm very proud to be a farmer here today, to be able to say that, proud to see the OFA, proud to see OAFE here and proud to have worked with Lisa Thompson, the member for Huron-Bruce, in my former life when I was heading the agriculture section at the plowing match.

I remember when we did that, we had thousands of kids come. That part I kind of expected, but we had the superintendent of the school board volunteer, we had a lot of teachers volunteer, and I think they learned more than the kids did. That's something that this motion speaks to, because when you educate the educators, it flows through the whole system. That's what we need to do, because if we educate the educators about the opportunities in agriculture, we will become an even bigger powerhouse in that sector than we are today. Some

people might say, “This doesn’t seem like a big thing.” If we did this, it’s a huge step forward.

In my closing few seconds—and I know we’re all being very positive here, and I like to be positive. But one thing this government has to realize about agriculture—and I’m going to be positive. If you take the issue of certified crop advisers, they are certified, they have a code of ethics and they should be allowed to perform their job. It’s one thing to educate people—you have them educated, they’re qualified, and they say, “Oh, no, no, we don’t think you’re quite qualified enough,” that’s an issue. Those types of issues we also have to look at. I’m hoping to be able to continue to work with the government on those issues.

I fully support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Huron–Bruce. You have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments that we heard from around the House today.

To the member from Welland: You made me think about the region that you proudly represent and I couldn’t help but think of Niagara College and the wine industry. A few years ago, they did an amazing job of marketing and increasing awareness about the industry and the opportunities that were connected to it. And guess what? They have a burgeoning college program now in the wine industry. That’s an example that this motion would like to follow, in the sense that if you do it properly, you increase awareness and students will come.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: We will be a bigger powerhouse in the nation because of that, and I very much appreciated that.

To the member from Durham: You mentioned the cider industry in your region. I can tell you, I have a number of family members who probably pricked up their ears and will want to take a road trip to your riding because they are connoisseurs of cider, if you will.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Applefest is next weekend.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay. Very good.

To the leader of the PC Party: I really appreciated his comments. It is with pride that we all stand here today and talk about the need to increase awareness of one of the best sectors that drives Ontario’s economy.

To the member from Burlington: When I worked for OMAFRA, I worked in the regions of Halton and Peel and I know about the primary production in your area. I know about the processing. I’m glad you touched on that today, and I thank you for that.

The list goes on and on. The representative from Algoma–Manitoulin said something that stuck with me and will stay with me. This will allow students to have a discussion about agriculture. We need those discussions because we have to have a very real picture painted so that they can be enthused about growing jobs and pursuing careers in agriculture.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
ELECTION ADVERTISING
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE
DES GROUPES D’INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 70 standing in the name of Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with the vote at the end of private members’ business.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM
FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES INFRASTRUCTURES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved private member’s notice of motion number 53.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD LITERACY
SENSIBILISATION À L’AGRICULTURE
ET AUX PRODUITS AGRICOLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member’s notice of motion number 14.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
ELECTION ADVERTISING
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE
DES GROUPES D’INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1611 to 1616.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Walker has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third

party election advertising. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Brown, Patrick	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Forster, Cindy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Rinaldo, Lou
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Sergio, Mario
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Thibeault, Glenn
		Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, in the interest of the Blue Jays needing some more fans, I will move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Labour has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: On division.

Laughter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until October 20, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1619.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Clerk / Greffier: Vacant

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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