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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 20 March 2017

Lundi 20 mars 2017

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Greffier
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 March 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 mars 2017

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Ontario Home Builders' Association to Queen's Park today. They will be arriving shortly. I want to remind everyone that they are holding an event in the dining room this evening, and I hope that people will take the time and go and talk with them.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming Anise Moinie from my riding of Richmond Hill. She's visiting the House today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to introduce to you today a great dairy farmer from Huron county, Ethan Wallace, who is involved with the federation of agriculture locally. Joining him is Brent Royce, provincial director of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from Perth county, in Listowel.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Joining us today from my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean is Darcy DeMarsico, a former legislative page herself, who is here to cheer on her daughter Catherine on her first day as a page. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so pleased to welcome page Jace Kramer, who attends French immersion at Louis-Honore Frechette Public School in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's going to be a fun three weeks.

Hon. Michael Chan: It's really my pleasure to welcome a guest of page captain Eashvar Sukumar. His father, Sukumar Balasubramaniam, is in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to have friends from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex with us today: Tom and Linda Ford; and Lloyd Arnold. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Home Builders' Association to Queen's Park today. I look forward to meeting with them later this afternoon.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I almost forgot, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome Kelly Harris, from FirstOntario Credit Union, to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Joining us today from Simcoe County Home Builders' Association in my riding of Barrie are Bob Schickendanz and Jennifer Lynch. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We have a new page captain, Joshua Geddes, with us today. His mother is joining him on his first day: Irena Geddes. Please welcome her to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Ken Russell, the president of Durham Region Home Builders Association, and executive officer Anita DeVries.

I would also like to give a warm welcome to Keira Hodgins from College Park Elementary School in Newcastle, who starts her first day today as a page. Welcome.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Home Builders' Association, Nicholas Harrington from the Kingston Home Builders Association, and John Henderson from Henderson Total Maintenance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome in the Legislative Assembly today a colleague, someone from across Canada, who has been very active in nation-building. The Minister of Finance for British Columbia, Mike de Jong, is here today. Welcome to Queen's Park. And to his chief of staff, Brian Menzies, welcome as well.

APPOINTMENT OF TABLE OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am pleased to advise the House of the appointment of a permanent table officer to serve this assembly. Effective today, Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim assumes the duties of Senior Clerk, House Documents. Welcome, and thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have received two notices of intent to raise a point of privilege: one from the official opposition House leader, Mr. Wilson, and one from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, Mr. Smith. I'm prepared to hear this morning from the opposition House leader, Mr. Wilson. I will deal with Mr. Smith's point of privilege later, but not this morning.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Jim Wilson: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I rise today pursuant to standing order 21, as indicated this morning in my letter to you. I believe there is reason to find a prima facie case of contempt against the Minister of Energy concerning government advertising or announcements on a matter yet to be decided by this House. The advertisement in question is paid for by the government of Ontario, by the taxpayers of Ontario. It not only definitively states the result of legislation that is yet to be tabled by the Minister of Energy, which is "25%

off your hydro bill,” but also presents an unqualified timeline: “starting this summer.”

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I take this very seriously, and I need to hear every word.

Please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The advertising in question was brought to my attention during March break and pertains to the government’s planned legislation regarding electricity. The advertising in question explicitly envisions a timeline and outcome for legislation which has yet to be introduced in the Legislature.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the most recent edition of *Erskine May* describes contempt as follows:

“Other acts, besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly by bringing such House into odium, contempt or ridicule or by lowering its authority, may constitute contempts.”

Indeed, Speaker Stockwell cited exactly those passages when ruling on the most relevant precedent faced by this Legislature as it pertained to government advertising in the case of municipal reforms to the city of Toronto in 1997. In that case, Speaker Stockwell laid out a very strict two-pronged test for whether government advertising which presumed an act by the House could be deemed a breach of privilege and a *prima facie* case of contempt. To quote Speaker Stockwell:

“However, I am very concerned by the ministry pamphlet, which was worded more definitely than the commercial and the press release. To name but a few examples, the brochure claims that ‘new city wards will be created,’ that ‘work on building the new city will start in 1997,’ and that ‘the new city of Toronto will reduce the number of municipal politicians.’”

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Speaker Stockwell goes on to say, “How is one to interpret such unqualified claims? In my opinion, they convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion, or that the assembly and the Legislature had a *pro forma*, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and law-making process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House. I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals—and that is all they are—been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them.”

That is why, in all of our releases, both sides of the House to this day from that ruling, we all say “if passed by the Legislature.” This advertising makes no mention of “if passed by this Legislature” in any of its forms, whether in social media or the radio.

The two prongs laid out by Speaker Stockwell are whether the claims are definitive and unqualified, and whether they presume an act of the House before the House has had the ability to offer its approval to them,

thus relegating the Legislature to a *pro forma* or inferior role in the legislative process.

On both tests, it appears the Ministry of Energy has committed a *prima facie* case of contempt.

The advertisement at question not only definitively states the result of legislation, “25% off your hydro bill,” but also presents an unqualified timeline, “starting this summer.”

By both committing the House to a result and a timeline, the minister has satisfied the first test of making definitive and unqualified claims.

With regard to Speaker Stockwell’s second test regarding whether the statements regulate the Legislature to a *pro forma* or inferior role in the legislative process, in the technical briefing provided recently to certain members of both the opposition and third party, a document from the ministry was provided which stated, “The government intends to introduce legislation that would, if passed, enable ... (IESO) and ... (OPG) to work together to refinance the GA over a longer period of time. The legislation would also outline the role of the ... (OEB), as it relates to the financing proposal.”

The government, under direction from the Ministry of Energy, therefore admits that legislation is necessary in order to enact the changes—so we’re not talking about regulations here—which changes what it has already begun to advertise as though they were already scheduled to be enacted. As of today, no such legislation has been introduced in this House, and the government has not reached out to members to even indicate when such legislation may be forthcoming. Thus, the government has admitted that legislation is necessary to bring the changes into effect, but has assumed that such legislation has already passed in its advertising, thereby committing this Legislature not only to a result, but to a timeline and forcing it into that inferior position in the legislative process that Speaker Stockwell outlined in his ruling of January 22, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to refer to my written submission of this morning that further details and supports a case, I believe, of *prima facie* contempt.

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

On this point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond to the motion raised by the opposition House leader.

The government respectfully submits that the advertising in question does not rise to a *prima facie* case of contempt against this House on two grounds. The first is with respect to the issue of members’ abilities to perform their duties, and the second is with respect to the government’s implementation of policy.

Firstly, it is of utmost importance that the definition of “privilege” in this case deals with interference with the proceedings of the Legislature as laid out in the October 17, 1980, ruling by the House of Commons Speaker Sauvé. There is no proceeding in this House upon which the member for Simcoe–Grey may state as being obstructed.

If there is to be a bill on this matter, that would be a different situation. The examples stated by the member

are all cases in which there was already a bill before this House. We have no such bill before the House and, accordingly, there is no proceeding to obstruct.

The question is whether, should a bill be introduced, the members in this House would feel constricted in their abilities to duly debate the matter before the House. That is a question for the future and not privilege.

Given that there is no bill or proceeding before the House, the very premise of privilege does not exist.

I do believe, Speaker, that you yourself will find the summary of the May 11, 1998, ruling of this House in which the Speaker said that such advertising does not amount to an “attempt by improper means to influence members in their parliamentary conduct...” They do not impede freedom of speech in this House, nor in fact do they relate to a particular proceeding currently before us.

Secondly, Speaker, the government reserves the right to implement its policies as it so chooses. Should a sudden change arise and the government can enact its measures without legislation, then the government is free to do so. The intention to table legislation is not the same as the requirement to table legislation.

As announced on March 2, the government is committed to a plan that will lower electricity bills by 25% on average for all residential customers across the province, and will also benefit half a million small businesses and farms, an initiative we had hoped the opposition would support.

As part of its function, the government has a responsibility to raise awareness and communicate information about programs and services that affect Ontarians. This includes informing Ontarians of changes to their electricity bills so that they can use this information to plan for the future as they manage their household budgets.

In the alternative, I submit that the member’s timeline is not entirely complete either. From his own submission, the content online and on social media were dated March 2. Accordingly, the member’s first opportunity to bring forward this claim would have been shortly thereafter. Speaker, we received the detailed submission from the member opposite around 9:15 this morning. Therefore, we humbly request the opportunity to give you detailed submissions in writing later today.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the first issue, the member may submit, and the third party can submit if it desires to do so.

I thank the opposition House leader for his submission, and the government House leader for his submission as well.

I’ll refer this to myself and come back to it at a due date later on for a ruling.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This Liberal government has no business in possibly

spending millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars on self-promoting hydro ads. They are blatantly partisan, and they are littering radio stations and social media in a sad attempt to save this government’s falling popularity.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing, stop spending public dollars on these advertisements, and order that they be cancelled today? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’ve been travelling the province. I’ve been talking to people for months, including last week. People are very, very concerned about their hydro bills. The Leader of the Opposition knows that. He knows, as does the third party, that people are looking for relief, and that the work we have done up until now—that there’s more we need to do. That’s why the 25% reduction is very important.

We’re moving ahead with our plan. I would have thought, given the noise from the other side, that they understand that people are concerned about their electricity bills, and that they would be supportive of the changes we are bringing forward that will give real relief to people across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: As the Premier travels the province, no one is asking for more government vanity ads. The Liberal government has a bad track record—a long track record—of misusing taxpayer-funded ads for partisan purposes. We all remember the \$8.1 million in self-congratulatory ads for the job-killing pension scheme that never came to fruition—\$8.1 million, just to pat themselves on the back.

How many millions of dollars is this government going to waste on more self-congratulatory radio ads?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The two issues that the Leader of the Opposition has raised—retirement security for people across the province, and lower electricity rates—I’m extremely proud of our record on delivering both of those.

The reality is that this Leader of the Opposition sat in a federal government for nine years—

Interjections.

1050

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He sat in a federal government for nine years that wouldn’t even talk to the province about retirement security, wouldn’t even talk about Canada Pension Plan enhancement.

We’ve moved on that. We now have a national agreement on pension enhancement, Mr. Speaker. We have an enhanced Canada Pension Plan because of the work that we did on the ORPP.

In addition, we’re going to deliver lower electricity rates.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: It really is unbelievable. When people can't afford their hydro bill, this government is spending millions on vanity ads self-promoting their own agenda.

I want to read a quote from the Auditor General: "The ads likely wouldn't have been approved under the old government advertising rules." That's Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk. The changes the Liberals enacted in 2015 reduced her office to a rubber stamp. I'll continue the quote from the Auditor General: "'Under the previous legislation it would likely not have passed because it does convey a positive impression of the current government and it's more like a pat-on-the-back type of advertisement,' she said."

Those rules were put into place to prevent Liberals wasting taxpayer dollars on vanity ads. They changed the rules so that they could use taxpayer dollars to promote themselves.

The government can dance; the government can point the finger; the government can avoid answering the question. For years they complained about these types of ads when they were in opposition. They come into government and change the rules to not allow this to happen, and now they're doing the same thing.

To the Premier: Are you going to continue with these vanity ads?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue. The reality is that, when this government came into office under my predecessor, there were virtually no rules around partisan advertising. In fact, I can remember sitting in this gallery and listening to the Liberal opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I can remember sitting in this gallery, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal opposition was asking the then Tory government about advertising that had the Premier's face in it and that was all over. There were kids out of school because there were strikes. There were hospitals being closed. Amalgamations were being imposed. Chaos was reigning, and the Premier of the day had his face all over advertising. We changed those rules, Mr. Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Since I can't get an answer on the government vanity ads, I'm going to try a new approach. A recent big, bold headline read, "Ontario Nursing Homes Feed Seniors on \$8.33 a Day." Does the Premier believe that is enough to nutritiously feed Ontario's vulnerable senior citizens?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to this. We have been working very closely with the long-term-care association and with long-term-care homes around the province. There have been thousands more beds built, and upgrades to beds across the province.

We know that there is more work to be done. We also know that, given the aging demographic, this is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time. I've got two others in my sight. Because of that, I might move to warnings, and I will do so if necessary.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, 10,000 new long-term-care beds have been built and another 13,500 have been redeveloped. We know that there is more work to be done, and we will work very closely with the long-term-care association as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The \$8.33 wasn't even the most shocking stat in that article. Mr. Speaker, do you know what shocked me more? I'll tell you: It was the fact that Ontario spends over a dollar more a day on prisoners' food than it does on seniors' long-term care—more on prisoners than seniors.

I know that when it comes to a choice of who we are going to support, seniors or prisoners, I'm with seniors. It is unbelievable that this government has made this allocation. Why do prisoners eat better than seniors in Premier Wynne's Ontario? I would like the Premier to answer this, please.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, come to order.

Premier?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, the number that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to is our provincially mandated minimum that is required by long-term-care homes to spend on raw food. Raw food doesn't include the costs which we fund separately for food preparation. It doesn't include the costs for serving the food. The menus that the long-term-care homes prepare have to be approved on site by a dietitian and, in fact, we provide tremendous flexibility within the budget that we provide long-term-care homes: \$142 per day per resident, with flexibility within that to allow for additional expenditures in raw food.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: When it comes to government ads, there are millions of dollars to spend on self-promotion. When it comes to seniors, there's nothing.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors is only asking for 33 cents a day. Prisoners would still be getting more than seniors. How is this fair? The lack of respect that we're seeing for seniors is unbelievable. They deserve so much better. No matter how the Minister of Health spins it or how the Premier spins it, the reality is under their rules, under their allocations, we are taking better care of prisoners than we are of seniors. These are people's fathers and mothers. These are our grandparents.

Premier, is this how you want to treat our seniors? Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand up and say this is unacceptable?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Last year in our budget, which they voted against, we increased the budget for raw food in the diet for residents of long-term-care homes. We increased that by 3.7%, well above the cost of food inflation, Mr. Speaker.

But we are listening to our stakeholders, our partners in long-term-care homes as they bring forward suggestions and proposals in advance of the budget in terms of the quantum that's required for raw food. I should mention that we have a line item in the budget called "Other Accommodation," which is \$54.52 per resident per day. All long-term-care homes have the opportunity to draw on that \$54, in addition to that which we have put aside for raw food, to provide—as they are mandated to—a nutritional diet for the residents.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier and her Liberal government ads touting their phantom hydro plan have been condemned by the Auditor General as "a pat on the back," a partisan exercise that would never have been allowed before the Liberals changed the rules on advertising.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians what the price tag is for these self-serving ads?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just remind the leader of the third party that we were the province in this country that actually introduced rules around partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker. Before this government came into office under my predecessor, those rules didn't exist. We put in place rules that said partisan advertising is unacceptable, in reaction to—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In reaction, Mr. Speaker, to the really egregious advertising that had been done by the Conservatives that was so blatantly partisan that it was obvious there needed to be restrictions put in place. Those restrictions are in place—

Interjection.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Dufferin–Caledon, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and we adhere to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I feel like it's comedy hour in the Legislature. This government changed the rules and then changed them back so that they could use public money to advertise and promote themselves when they get into political trouble. Not one dime has come off the skyrocketing hydro bills, and this Premier has not tabled a plan yet or even any legislation yet to show Ontarians what their money is going to be spent on or if they are even going to save any money in the future. But she is still spending more money on advertising, claiming that the problem has been solved.

How much is this attempt to buy some political relief on hydro bills going to cost Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just remind the leader of the third party that we have a plan that actually will reduce people's electricity bills and will reduce those bills by the summer. Substantial relief: 25% on average off all bills across the province for residents who pay for electricity in their homes, further relief for people who are paying disproportionately high distribution costs in remote and rural areas, and an enhancement to the Ontario Electricity Support Program that will help people on low income. It's a substantial program that will deliver relief and will deliver it in a timely manner.

I am so pleased that the leader of the third party is eager to get going on that plan, and I look forward to her support as we move forward.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of partisan ads, how about we actually see the plan? We hear a lot of talk, we see a lot of press releases, but we have not yet seen a plan. These ads are obviously much more about the Premier and her Liberal Party instead of making life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

How much public money—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —is this Premier spending on advertising for the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. In case you didn't hear it, the member from Durham, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, come to order.

Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How much public money are this Premier and her Liberal Party spending on advertisements for the billion-dollar hydro borrowing scheme that she has still not made public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am so pleased that we are talking about our plan, the plan that we've brought forward that is going to reduce people's electricity bills across the province, because it is a substantial plan and it actually will work.

I was at a business this past week, called J'adore, in Newmarket—no, Barrie. I was in Barrie at a great chocolate and cheese shop. They are going to see a substantial reduction in their electricity bill, which is going to allow them to expand their business. They are building a patio on the back of their store, J'adore, and it is going to be a real anchor on the main street in Barrie.

That's the kind of business we want to see thrive, and that's why it's so important that the real plan that we are bringing forward is going to give them real relief.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier has shown Ontarians where her priorities are: self-serving, partisan radio ads first; actual legislation or a tangible plan, sometime later I guess.

Ontario families, businesses and public institutions like hospitals have a right to know what will happen to their hydro bills and who will pay the price for the \$40 billion going to line the pockets of bankers.

When will the Premier finally table her proposed hydro plan so that people know when and by how much their bills are going to end up going up?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and talk about when we're going to be bringing forward the legislation this spring to reduce everyone's bills by 25%, in time so they can have this relief before summer. I know there will be time for proper debate and public hearings.

I now know that the opposition critics have received a technical briefing on our plan, and they've also received comprehensive briefing documents including technical decks, background, our speeches and sample bills demonstrating the reductions that are going to be happening. I know our plan is going to offer real relief for all of our families, small businesses and farms right across the province.

I know the opposition parties are putting forward nothing but platitudes. Our plan is going to make sure that we bring forward real relief for families, for small businesses and for farms right across the province. We're going to make sure it happens before summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: From 2011 to 2015, the hospital in Sault Ste. Marie saw their hydro bill rise by \$2.7 million, an increase of 45% in just four short years, while their hydro consumption during that time frame remained exactly the same.

Since the Premier refuses to release her plan, will she be running an ad soon to let hospitals like the one in the Soo know if they're going to see relief on their hydro bills any time soon?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the third party needs to stop misleading Ontarians about the health care—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I will withdraw—confusing Ontarians about our health care system.

Since coming into office, we've increased hospital funding by 54%, allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country.

Now I know both opposition parties are furiously trying to muddy the record by—not necessarily confusing the impact of energy costs. The reality is that hospitals spend 1.6%, on average, of their total operating budgets on electricity. That means well over 95% of hospital budgets go towards the rest: hiring nurses and doctors, keeping wait times low and ensuring that patients have access to the high-quality services that they need.

Hospitals are also eligible for the saveONenergy program. I'll talk more about that in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not just families at home, businesses or hospitals that are suffering either. Municipalities are also worried about whether the Premier's \$40-billion borrowing deal will actually help them keep community facilities open.

When I met with leaders from Echo Bay, Desbarats, Bruce Mines, Hilton Beach, St. Joseph, and Batchewana First Nation not long ago, they all told me that skyrocketing hydro rates are on the verge of closing their local arenas or community centres.

Since this Premier refuses to release the details of her \$40-billion borrowing plan, will she run an ad soon to let local municipal leaders know if they're going to get some real relief from soaring hydro bills and be able to keep community centres, like arenas, open?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to begin by saying that, since forming government, we've increased municipal support to nearly four times what it was in 2003. So, unlike the previous Conservative government which downloaded billions of dollars of costs onto the backs of municipalities and residential property taxpayers, we are alleviating the financial burden off of our municipal partners. Residents in every single one of Ontario's 444 municipalities will benefit from the fair hydro plan.

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Talking about municipalities, I know that the mayor in Hamilton was in the news recently, talking about our fair hydro plan. He says that a 25% reduction "is a very positive step for the city's hydro customers." He credited our government with listening to Ontarians and implementing what he calls "dramatic" reductions.

Mr. Speaker, this is the mayor of the leader of the third party's own city. So it begs the question: When this legislation is brought forward, will they support this, and will they follow the advice of the mayor of Hamilton and

make sure that they support us in supporting this 25% reduction—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Over the last five years, 350 front-line health care workers have been cut from the North Bay Regional Health Centre—that includes 100 nurses—and 60 beds have been closed in this new hospital. This week, between 30 and 40 more health care workers will be sent home.

We can't take much more of this in North Bay. Their jobs are being lost as a direct result of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandals.

To add to their troubles, the hospital has seen a hydro increase of 65% over the last six years. The hospital CEO says that with these latest cuts, he's starting to be very worried about patient care.

My question to the Premier is this: Do you care enough about the patients in North Bay to do something?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're proud—and I think the member opposite, if asked, would admit as well—of that brand new facility in North Bay, the hospital that's providing excellent and the highest quality of care. That has never been a question and has never been in doubt.

Last year in the budget—in the budget that they of course voted down—where we allocated 345 million new dollars to hospitals, that included a 2% increase in the funding that we provided to North Bay Regional Health Centre. We have funded it and increased the funding year over year over year, so that they can address those pressures that they naturally do face, but continue to provide the highest quality of care to the community that they serve.

They have approached the ministry, Mr. Speaker, in this current fiscal year, and I'm happy to address that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: With the \$107 million cut from the OLG funding to hospitals, virtually the same dollars are being reallocated every year, and most of the funds get distributed to the high-growth areas. But even though our communities in the north are not growing, our seniors are aging. We also have a higher incidence of many chronic diseases in the north.

Because of these extra costs and increased hydro bills, the hospital didn't quite balance their budget this year. That makes them ineligible for the \$7 million in working capital relief. They're in a no-win downward spiral.

My question to the Premier is simple: Will she readmit North Bay Regional Health Centre into the relief program, allowing them to hit their targets and stop this downward cycle?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, we have received a request from the hospital. We're working closely with them and with the LHIN in strong collaboration and partnership—which I should point out, Mr. Speaker, is something that that party, when they were in government, in North Bay absolutely did not do.

In 2001, North Bay hospital faced a \$6.5-million deficit. At the time, Mike Harris said, "North Bay, and Sturgeon Falls and Mattawa that" have "deficits are not going to be able to be funded in future years," making it clear that the PC government would not work with hospitals to maintain services.

We don't work that way. We're working closely with the hospital today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today, the NDP will introduce a rent protection for all tenants act. This act will close the loophole that allows landlords in buildings built later than 1991 to hike rents as much as they want, whenever they want. We hear from families that say these increases are chasing them from their homes, the place they're raising their kids.

Will the Premier close this unfair loophole to protect renters in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: It's a very good question. It's really unacceptable that so many Ontarians are faced with housing costs that are rising so dramatically. Families on tight budgets really are feeling the pinch of a rental market that is struggling to keep up with demand.

We've already been working on a number of areas. Since last June, we've been consulting with tenants, landlords and others right across the province looking at the Residential Tenancies Act and what we'll be able to do to tweak that to make things better. We've passed the inclusionary zoning, another tool for municipalities to use to construct affordable housing. There's a whole number of things, a whole host of things. I'd love to go down this list, and I'll do that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's hope it doesn't take them as long as it took for inclusionary zoning to fix the 1991 rule. The fact is that many Ontario households are at a tipping point right now. Some people are seeing rent increases of hundreds of dollars if not \$1,000. More and more working people are being forced to couch-surf or even return to their parents' homes.

Premier Wynne has had a number of years already to fix this problem but instead is leaving millions of Ontario's residents, Ontario's renters, in the lurch. My question is, why has she failed to take action thus far?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Well, thank you again for that follow-up question. This government has done a number of very important things, on top of talking with landlords and tenants right across the province about issues they face every day, especially around the Residential

Tenancies Act. I mentioned inclusionary zoning. I can talk about how we have frozen the municipal property tax on apartment buildings to provide relief to renters. We've doubled the maximum refund for first-time homebuyers. Right now, we're collecting data to better understand Ontario's housing market.

But when it comes to the 1991 exemption, we have said that we will be expanding on that. We will bring legislation that deals with that along with the RTA. We are listening, Speaker. We know the problem that people face not only in Toronto but right across Ontario, and we're taking action.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, increases in home prices and rents have made housing affordability a concern for a growing number of people. In fact, it's an issue that I've heard about from my constituents time and time again. A year ago in my riding, my office was unable to find even a single room to rent for a constituent with a budget of \$500 a month. Prices have only skyrocketed since then. I frequently hear from young families looking to buy their first home who are having a challenging time getting into the market in the greater Toronto area.

Could the minister please explain what steps our government has taken to improve housing affordability?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government does understand that housing affordability has become a significant issue not just for those families living in the greater Toronto area but in many communities across the province. It's why our government doubled the maximum refund for the land transfer tax rebate to \$4,000. We doubled that refund. More than half of first-time homebuyers now in Ontario will pay no LTT on the purchase of their first home.

We also know that renters are struggling to find affordable places to live, which is why we are freezing municipal property taxes on apartment buildings to give relief to renters. We're also participating very closely alongside the BC government as well as the cities of Toronto and Vancouver in a federal working group on the housing market.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Back to the Minister of Finance: I'm pleased to hear that the government is taking steps to address this issue. That extra money could be put towards closing costs, a larger down payment or new appliances for a first-time buyer's home. I'm also happy to hear that the government is continuing to work on further ways to make it more affordable for Ontarians to buy a home.

I know that our government has been participating alongside the BC government and the cities of Toronto and Vancouver in a federal housing market working group to look at further ways to improve affordability. Could the minister please provide an update as to how he is working with other levels of government to help make housing more affordable for the people in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member from Barrie. Mr. Speaker, uncertainty in the housing market has been partially driven by speculation. In fact, just today, TD Economics released a special report on the housing market, arguing that the heightened uncertainty in the market can be largely attributed to speculation.

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There are a number of options to reduce speculative investment in the housing market that could raise revenue to support other housing affordability measures. That's why I've sent a letter to the federal Minister of Finance to request that the federal government consider increasing the capital gains inclusion rate for non-principal residences. Under the current rule, when you sell a home that is not your principal residence for a profit, only 50% of the capital gain is included in taxable income.

This change will be an important step toward keeping our country's housing market stable and curbing price acceleration. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the federal government to make housing more affordable for Ontario families.

SEXUAL ASSAULT TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. We all know that sexual assault is a big problem in our communities, and that our public institutions haven't always shown the proper sensitivity in responding to this crime. Two weeks ago, the federal House of Commons gave unanimous support to a bill that would require would-be judges to receive sexual assault training. But last week, victim services organizations were disappointed to hear that the government of Ontario has no plans to follow suit in making sexual assault training mandatory for its judicial appointees.

Why won't the government take the issue of sexual assault seriously and require potential judges to receive the training they need to properly handle sensitive sexual assault cases?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for this question. It's a very important issue and I know it's an issue that all members of this Legislature, and Ontarians in general, are always concerned about.

We know that sexual assault is a serious issue that demands attention from all levels of government. That's why I'm very proud that our government introduced the It's Never Okay strategy. It's a \$41-million action plan to stop sexual violence and harassment. It's our Premier who has taken a leadership role in ensuring that we have robust programs to ensure that we put an end to sexual violence and harassment in our province.

As a result of that plan, we have launched a free, independent legal advice pilot program for survivors of sexual assault. Hundreds of people so far have accessed the program.

We have increased funding to the 42 sexual assault centres across Ontario by \$1.75 million, for a total of

\$14.8 million, and we have passed legislation removing barriers for survivors—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Requiring judges to be trained to handle sexual assault cases is the right thing to be doing. Alluding to the fact that judges can be trained through ads is quite an incredible answer from the Minister of the Attorney General. In fact, training judges would actually strengthen Ontario's trust in the judicial system. If Ontarians knew that judges were trained to handle sexual assault cases with the proper sensitivity, maybe more victims would be willing to come forward.

Again to the Premier: Will she accept the common-sense proposal to require our judges to be trained to handle sexual assault cases since the Minister of the Attorney General is not saying yes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This is a very serious issue. This is an issue that is not partisan in nature whatsoever. I'm very proud of our Premier for taking a leadership role when it comes to a very definitive action plan on putting an end to sexual violence and harassment in our province.

What we also have to be mindful of is that we have an independent judiciary. We have to respect the independence of the judiciary. When it comes to the training and education of our judiciary, that is an independent matter that is decided upon by the chief justices of the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice.

In Ontario, judges function separately and independently of the government, and training and education are within their exclusive—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon is warned.

You have a wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: However, Speaker, we're always open to talking about more training around sexual violence and harassment. Thank you.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Access to health care should be based on needs, not on ability to pay, but under this Liberal government, a growing number of private clinics are running a second tier of health services in our province. These elite private clinics can charge up to \$4,000 a year for members to get faster access to physicians, faster access to MRIs or both. It's called queue-jumping.

Does the Premier think that it is right to force most people to wait longer for the health care they need while rich people can buy their way to the front of the line? If not, then why is the Premier letting private clinics undermine our public health care here in Ontario?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know, like myself, the member opposite is absolutely committed to medicare, to the

Canada Health Act and the principles behind that. She has been watching my performance as health minister for almost three years now. I hope that she also sees those principles in action—the importance to me personally and professionally as a health care provider, as she is, of health equity, of ensuring that those vulnerable individuals, those who truly and most need access to health services, that that's where we focus our attention. On that incredibly important issue of access as well, that it is fair and equal and equitable access, Mr. Speaker.

We are closely monitoring some activities that are taking place, including what she has just referenced. We're looking to ensure that those principles are upheld.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I've been bringing up this issue of the private clinics growing in Ontario for the last five years. This is a long time to monitor what's going on.

Ask any mom in Ontario how long it takes to get an appointment with their family physician for her sick child. It can take weeks. But under the Liberals, people can pay a private clinic for 24/7 access to a doctor. Ask any senior how long it takes to get an MRI. I went on the website today; the average wait time is 106 days. But at a private clinic, people can pay to get an MRI within one or two days, forcing everybody else to wait longer.

When you need access to high-quality health care in Ontario, you should be asked for your health card, not your credit card. Does the Premier think that patients in Ontario should pay up or wait longer for the health care that they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, I guess my memory must be failing me, because in the three years that I've been health minister, the member opposite has not raised this issue with me, by my recollection, at all. But now that it is in the Toronto Star, I know that she has seen it as an important issue, as do we. That's why in 2004, we introduced legislation that made it illegal for any person or entity to charge or accept any benefit for an insured service in addition to the amount that is paid by OHIP. We also made it illegal for any person to pay, charge or receive payment or other benefits to receive special or expedited access to the medicare system.

However, this is important to this government, as demonstrated by the legislation in 2004. We are continuing to watch this very, very closely to ensure that it does not violate that act or the Canada Health Act.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. We know that Ontario festivals and the events we have here attract tourists, support tens of thousands of jobs and generate millions in economic growth. I'm very proud to be part of a government that supports these events so people can be drawn to visit and celebrate in our communities.

In my own riding of Beaches–East York, I'm very pleased to know that we're assisting with the Canadian

Food Truck Festivals; the Toronto Vocal Arts Festival, called Sing, which celebrates a cappella music; Woofstock; the iconic Beaches International Jazz Festival; and of course, Caribana, which has had a long history in the city of Toronto. We have been seeing these festivals and we know that these events play a fundamental role in our cultural and economic vitality.

I'm pleased to ask the minister today about an announcement she made last Monday at Mills Hardware in Hamilton. Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the members of this House more about what was announced on Monday and how Celebrate Ontario is improving our communities?

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Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for the question and for his championing of events in the arts community in his riding.

Earlier this month I was with Sonic Unyon, the creators of Supercrawl in Hamilton, an annual festival that transforms James Street into a weekend-long celebration of the arts. Here, visitors can see great musical acts and unique art installations and experience amazing local food and craft beer, right in the heart of downtown Hamilton. Supercrawl has been around for almost a decade now, and it has grown into a must-see for music and art lovers.

Speaker, we're proud to be supporting Supercrawl with over half a million dollars over two years, along with five other initiatives in Hamilton.

In participating in events like Supercrawl, visitors might make a stop at the fabulous Art Gallery of Hamilton or Theatre Aquarius, two pillars of the local arts and culture scene.

We know that these events draw tourists, but we're also investing in a growing cultural scene. I'm proud of our contributions to such a culture scene and looking forward to talking about the impact Celebrate Ontario is making right across Ontario in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for her answer and for her incredible championing of events all across Ontario. So many festivals and events, like Supercrawl, as she mentioned, and North by Northeast, which also receives significant money, and up in Thunder Bay the World Junior Baseball Championship, are having a very positive impact on the music and the culture scenes of Ontario.

Across the province, Celebrate Ontario 2017 means that organizers can now enhance their programming, their activities and their services. They now offer new and enhanced experiences that attract even more tourists and increase visitor spending.

I know that Celebrate Ontario will have a very positive economic impact in every corner of the province in 2017, our 150th celebratory year. From food festivals and music festivals to events that teach us about our heritage and cultural diversity, our communities will benefit from increased tourism and visitor spending right across the province.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will she update the members of this House on the economic impacts expected from Celebrate Ontario investments this summer?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you again to the member for the question. Our government understands the important role that festivals and events play in bringing communities together and in supporting local businesses. In this respect, Celebrate Ontario has been enormously successful.

Later this afternoon I'll be in Markham, along with Minister Chan, to highlight the multicultural aspects of Celebrate Ontario. In fact, every dollar of Celebrate Ontario funding triggers almost \$20 of visitor expenditures, supporting thousands of jobs and generating millions of dollars in revenue.

These festivals enhance the quality of life, and they attract investment too. Knowing the strength of this program and the important opportunity we have, especially in our sesquicentennial year, our government is investing more than \$19 million across Ontario. We're supporting over 300 festivals and events—a record number in the history of Ontario.

This commitment will have a province-wide impact, and we're proud of it, Speaker. We're also proud that we're doing a tremendous amount in local and northern communities.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today we heard from the Ontario Long Term Care Association how this government has abdicated its responsibility to properly fund long-term care, leaving hundreds of thousands of seniors to go without the care that they need and deserve. Some 11,000 people—myself included—signed a petition to call on you to stand up for seniors by ensuring that funding for fundamentals like food and hydro in nursing homes never again falls below inflation.

On behalf of all of them, I ask: Will the minister commit to providing stable and predictable funding to support the needs of those most vulnerable seniors entrusted in his care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course this government is committed to providing that ongoing and stable funding to seniors and others who reside in long-term-care homes across this province. That's partly why we made—and I just referenced it—the 3.7% increase in the raw food diet in last year's budget. That's why we have committed by 2025 to redeveloping 30,000 new long-term-care beds. That's why since coming into office in 2003 we have built more than 10,000 new beds in long-term care. I have a list here if the member opposite wants to see precisely where those beds have been built—more than 10,000 since coming into office.

We are committed. We are providing those resources in a sustainable fashion.

Interjection.

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

Supplementary question.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to see lists because I've been asking for two years in estimates and I've got nothing from you. You spend more money on prisoners than you do on seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's chronic underfunding has resulted in a lack of staff, a lack of behavioural supports, increased attacks, 30,000 outdated beds and a record-high wait-list of 26,500 seniors. It's shameful, and that list is going to go to 50,000 in the next six years.

The message is clear: Anything less than the rate of inflation is setting up our valued seniors needing long-term-care support for a big disaster. So again I ask, will the minister ensure that our seniors' homes have the means to provide better care by committing to funding them, especially for food and hydro, at a minimum, for inflationary increases each and every year?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I value the partnership that we have with those who are in that important position of providing long-term care to the residents of this province, and I greatly appreciate the pre-budget submission that they have made, where they speak to the importance of the quantum that's provided, the dollar amount that's provided for residents. We provide roughly \$52,000 a year per resident per home in a number of categories.

But also, I particularly appreciated when they were talking about the aspect of "predictable and sustainable." I've been working with them, and it's important for us to see if we can find a way that we cannot only meet that sustainable requirement, but that we can do it in a way which gives them predictability into the future with regard to what they can expect, so they can plan for that increase.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Hidden deep within last year's budget was this government's inexplicable decision to cancel autism therapies for children over the age of five. After blindsiding families that had spent years waiting for services, the decision was finally reversed—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Half a million dollars more this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The chief government whip is warned.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —under enormous pressure from across the province, or so they claimed. Now, almost a year later, evidence is emerging that many children over the age of five are still being denied services, therapies and hope.

What does the Premier have to say to the families of children with autism who have had the rug pulled out from under them a second time?

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: I thank the member for the question. As the member knows, this is an important

issue. As a government, we see this as one of our top priorities when it comes to working with families here in the province of Ontario. That's why we invested half a billion dollars of new money into this program. By doing this, what we're doing is creating 16,000 new spaces across the province of Ontario. We're looking at providing diagnostics and testing early, and creating more spots for that so young people get the type of services they need.

The member opposite knows that we've committed to launching a new program in June that will address many of the issues that this province has taken on, not only through this government's tenure but for many, many years—decades, Mr. Speaker—so I'm quite proud of the direction we're going in. If the member opposite really wants to be briefed on where we are and our progress she can sit down with me any time and get that type of information in detail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Back to the Premier: Ontarians are tired of being fooled. In an open letter to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, concerned parents of children with autism noted that wait-lists are still growing. Services are still being reduced and families have been left in the dark about how this will affect their children's lives.

Every child in Ontario deserves the right to reach their full potential on their terms, not on your terms. Will the Premier do what she promised for families and commit to actually reinstating the services for these children?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I've been across this province and I've talked to parents. I've met with parents in many jurisdictions. In fact, I've met with parents that are from the member opposite's jurisdiction, parents from Oshawa, in Durham region. I've met parents and they're very thankful for the direction we're taking. I get phone calls, I get emails, I speak to parents directly, and they're happy about the direction we're going in.

I just want to give you some of the latest direct funding numbers that we have here, Mr. Speaker. We've had almost 2,300 families sign up for the \$8,000 initial payment, we've got 775 families that opted in to receiving the \$10,000, and these numbers continue. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the families that were on the wait-list can apply for the \$8,000 and then \$10,000 and then \$10,000, and it continues until their services are unnecessary.

So I would hope the member opposite would wait until June to see what the new program is like and then, from there, we can have a conversation about how we go forward.

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HOME BUILDING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, the building industry plays a key role in the lives of Ontarians. They build the places where we live, work and spend our free time, and

they help shape our communities, including my own community of Davenport.

Today, the Ontario Home Builders' Association is here at Queen's Park. The Ontario Home Builders' Association was formed in 1962 to give residential builders a voice in the provincial government and to facilitate changes in the industry. Their members build the homes that shape our communities, and they have been an important voice in the province. I understand that they have been engaged on a number of government priorities over the years, including updates to the province's building code.

Would the Minister of Municipal Affairs speak about how the Ontario Home Builders' Association has contributed to the discussion of government priorities?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question, and I want to begin by ensuring that all members of the Legislature are aware that tonight there is a reception with the Ontario home builders, starting around 5 o'clock this evening in the legislative dining room downstairs. We hope to see everybody there.

Speaker, in my first go-round in this ministry back in 2014, it was a pleasure for me to meet, through that experience, the Ontario home builders for the first time and have an opportunity to announce our six-storey wood frame construction in the province of Ontario. It was intended to help the forestry sector but also led, I would say, from my perspective, to an unintended consequence at the time I tabled my private member's bill, to see an ability to increase the amount of affordable housing in the province of Ontario that came forward as a result of that.

Through that process, we were able to have significant consultations with the Ontario Home Builders' Association as one of our key stakeholders. It's helped to forge that relationship with our government, and I look forward to talking more about that stakeholder consultation in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his answer. Our government is currently conducting a coordinated review of the growth plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges moraine plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan. These plans work together to protect our natural resources like prime farmland, to make efficient use of existing infrastructure, and to prevent sprawl by directing growth to already built-up areas. The coordinated review is the legislated 10-year review of these plans.

I understand that our government will introduce updated plans in the coming months and that these plans will be the result of extensive consultation dating back to 2015, which includes a report from an advisory committee and a nearly six-month public consultation period in 2016.

I also understand that the Ontario Home Builders' Association has been involved in the process throughout. Would the minister elaborate on how the Ontario Home Builders' Association has contributed its expertise during the consultation process?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I again thank the member for the question. She's right: The OHBA has been a significant stakeholder for us through this particular review. It's a good chance for me to give a shout-out, again, to that panel that was chaired by David Crombie and included Leith Moore, the past president of the OHBA. I also want to recognize Neil Rodgers, recently elected as the OHBA's 50th president, and give a shout-out to the CEO, Joe Vaccaro, as well.

As the member has mentioned, they are a significant stakeholder for us in this process. We're aware that the OHBA has some 4,000 members. They have built more than 700,000 homes in Ontario in the last 10 years, and they are a significant contributor to the economy of Ontario: somewhere in the range of \$45 billion to our economy every year.

So, yes, they have played a significant role in our work on the coordinated land use review. We look forward to coming forward with those plans in the near future, and we want to thank them and all stakeholders for their input into this process.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Premier. Vuteq, one of the largest employers in my riding, said that on a single hydro bill, the charge for electricity used was \$38,000, but when they add on the government global adjustment and other charges, the final monthly bill was—listen to this, Premier—\$385,000. They run 24 hours a day to deliver “just in time” to car plants, so they can't shift production to use the ICI program.

Can the Premier explain why this major employer is paying more than \$350,000, or 90% of their hydro bill, for the government's extra billing charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and talk about the programs that are out there that are actually helping businesses, and I do hope that this one business will utilize many of the programs that are out there to help them save dollars. There is the the IEP program, there is the Industrial Accelerator Program—there are many other programs out there to actually help small businesses and help our medium-sized manufacturing businesses ensure that they can reduce their rates, because we recognize the importance of actually helping our businesses reduce those rates. We've seen many of those businesses right across the province use many of these programs, and that will help them reduce their bills.

When it comes to Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, we're going to see all of our small businesses—they're going to see that 25% reduction coming right off, and that's something that will help them and farms right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The minister obviously missed the comment. I said these programs do not work for Vuteq in Woodstock.

Back to the Premier: In the past few months, it's been announced that Oxford is losing 1,000 jobs, and the government's hydro rates for businesses are putting more of these jobs at risk. Yet the government's hydro announcement does nothing to help the major businesses we have left, which of course would be Vuteq.

Premier, people can't pay their hydro bills if they lose their job. What does the Premier have to say to all the people of Oxford who are worried that their job will be the next to disappear because of her government's policies?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, here's what I say to the folks in Oxford and here's what I say to folks right across this province: We have taken a number of measures to make this province more competitive. In fact, we have the lowest effective corporate tax rates, very generous R&D tax credits. We've invested with businesses to the tune of \$3.1 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook will come to order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lower the humidity in here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not amused with that comment.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our investments with businesses right across this province of \$3.1 billion since 2004 have accrued over \$31 billion in private sector investments, 175,000 jobs created and retained.

Where are we, Mr. Speaker? We have not had a lower unemployment rate in a decade—not in a decade. We're leading the G7 in growth. We've created 700,000 jobs, and for the first time in 13 years, we've seen seven consecutive—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member for Prince Edward—Hastings is warned.

New question.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

There is an ongoing crisis in mental health services in London that shows no sign of improving. The London Health Sciences Centre psychiatric ER regularly operates at 130% capacity. Before the March break, LHSC reported that there were 22 mental health patients waiting for beds—some for more than seven days—on hallway stretchers or in overflow rooms. Last week, my constituent Angela Jolly waited five days in the hallway before she was even assigned a doctor.

LHSC psychiatrist Dr. Ganjavi tells me that it all comes down to funding—funding that is needed for more beds, for more nurses, for more community services.

London's mental health crisis has been raised numerous times in this Legislature and in the London media, so why does this government refuse to act?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We absolutely are acting. In fact, we've made unprecedented investments in mental health right across this province. Just a number of weeks ago, there was an important announcement for 1,150 new supportive housing units to add to the 1,000 that were announced last year, where we've announced that for the first time, by any jurisdiction in Canada, we're providing government-funded, publicly funded cognitive behavioural therapy.

In London itself, not only do they benefit and are benefitting from this supportive housing, but also we opened up a crisis centre which provides that critically important alternative to hospitalization or visits to ERs, where there are strong community supports and experts in place who can provide that resource that individuals in crisis so definitely need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Londoners must wait six months or more to see an outpatient psychiatrist, and the 24/7 crisis centre that the minister mentioned was at capacity almost from the moment it opened its doors. About one third of the people who access the crisis centre are diverted from ERs, but fully two thirds are first-time users of the mental health system. And the \$10 million that was promised more than a year ago for additional stabilization beds has yet to appear.

Will the Premier commit today to releasing that funding for those stabilization beds to the crisis centre now? More importantly, will she come to London and meet with the nurses, the physicians and the patients who are struggling to deal with this desperate situation?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That \$1.2 million that we invested in the London crisis centre is obviously making an important difference to individuals in that community.

But we're also working with the hospital. We've provided them with significant new funding, including in mental health, and we have committed and are in the middle of a \$140-million new investment in mental health over a three-year period, and \$50 million annualized after that.

Our funding to the London Health Sciences Centre has increased not only by 73% since we came into office, but also a significant new investment in funds last year, which will help them deal with that, to improve their capacity, on this critically important issue.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise on a point of order. Under the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act of 2009, the social justice tribunals of Ontario are required to submit an annual report to the responsible minister within 90 days of the end of the fiscal year. Within 60 days after the respon-

sible minister receives the report, he or she is required to table it in this assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention to the fact that the annual report for the social justice tribunals of Ontario for the year 2015-16 is outstanding, and I'm not aware that the appropriate minister has provided this House with any explanation for the delay.

I request that you convey to the minister my concerns, and those of the House, that this particular report, which is required to have been filed, has not in fact been filed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To be clear to the member, that is not the duty of the Speaker. Therefore, it's actually not a point of order. But I'm sure that the appropriate ministers should be on notice that all of their duties must be fulfilled in the timely pattern that has been outlined in the regulations and the rules. I leave it at that, for the member to make his point.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to welcome Mr. Steve Tobey, from Tobey Developments, in Brighton. Welcome, Steve.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: In regard to my earlier submission, I would like to refer you to the Minister of Energy's comments today during question period, where he said, "We will be tabling legislation to reduce hydro bills by 25%."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has the right to submit in writing another addendum to his report, as I have given the government and the third party the opportunity to do so.

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

The House recessed from 1154 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to welcome representatives of two breweries from Parry Sound–Muskoka who will be here for your beer-tasting event this afternoon: Darren Smith and Chris Simpson will be here from Lake of Bays Brewing Co. in Baysville; and Daniel Pattison, Tim Charters, Bob MacDonald and Todd Lewin will be here from Muskoka Brewery in Bracebridge. I hope all members will visit your Speaker's beer event this afternoon and, of course, vote for these beers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's everyone's tasting, it's everyone's tasting.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: March is National Kidney Month. During National Kidney Month, all Ontarians are encouraged to give their kidneys a second thought and a well-deserved checkup.

Kidneys are some of the most versatile organs in our bodies. Located in the lower back, they are in charge of filtering waste out of upwards of 200 litres of blood a day. They also release hormones that help regulate blood pressure, control the production of red blood cells and regulate the body's salt, potassium and acid content, while balancing the body's fluids. They remove drugs from the body and produce an active form of vitamin D that promotes strong and healthy bones.

Unfortunately, there are usually no symptoms to alert one of kidney disease before the disease progresses a great deal. Those most susceptible to kidney disease are those with diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of kidney failure.

During National Kidney Month it's important to note that one in 10 Canadians has kidney disease. Each day 15 people are told that their kidneys are failing. The leading cause of kidney failure is diabetes, which is 38%. There's no cure for kidney disease. In 2012, kidney disease was the 10th leading cause of death in Canada. Some 76% of Canadians are waiting for a kidney transplant and 47% of all transplants are made possible by living donors.

Later this month, I'll be attending the fifth annual No Kidneying Around Fundraiser in St. Thomas. I'd like to thank Doug and Candice Van Diepen for raising over \$24,000 with these events for the Kidney Foundation of Canada, southwestern Ontario chapter.

I'd also like to thank the Kidney Foundation of Canada for all they do, from promoting kidney disease awareness during the month to fundraising to find a cure.

During National Kidney Month please remember to take care of your hard-working kidneys and consider being a donor with the Trillium Gift of Life program.

WINDSOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to take the opportunity to tell this Legislature about one of the brightest of the crown jewels within the artistic community of Windsor and Essex county. The Windsor Symphony Orchestra has been putting on concerts for the past 76 years. It was formed initially to raise funds for local servicemen serving overseas. Those early concerts were broadcast live every Sunday evening on CKLW radio. The Windsor Symphony was awarded the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's arts award in 2001 and again in 2004. They have been nominated for a Gemini Award.

The symphony goes into our local schools. They work with Ontario's curriculum and create educational programming that touches the lives of those eager to learn more as well as those who have yet to experience the power and energy of live orchestral music for the first

time. They also have a youth orchestra and do an amazing job on their Peanut Butter n' Jam music series for toddlers and their parents.

Speaker, just so you know, astronaut Chris Hadfield performed his first concert on earth with the Windsor Symphony.

Of course, no orchestra would be complete without a team of volunteers, and the symphony guild puts on a number of fundraising events every year. They have a fashion show coming up that will celebrate not only the creativity of the orchestra, but also that of our top Canadian designers, all in celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary.

We have a great team of professional musicians in Windsor and Essex county led by Maestro Robert Franz, and they have an amazing team of volunteers and supporters behind them. So a tip of the hat to the Windsor Symphony Orchestra from all of us here at the Ontario Legislature.

ONTARIO 55+ WINTER GAMES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: On February 21, 2017, I had the distinct pleasure to represent the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, along with the Minister of Seniors Affairs, in the town of Cobourg at the opening of the Ontario 55+ Winter Games.

The three-day, multi-sport event is the only one of its kind in the province for the over-55 age demographic. Participants from across Ontario gathered together at the opening ceremonies to celebrate and kick off the games and events such as skiing, curling, duplicate bridge, ice hockey, skating, bowling and volleyball that were hosted at facilities in Cobourg, Brighton, Port Hope, Orono and Peterborough. It really was community that came together to put on this incredible event.

Speaker, it was my honour to welcome the over 800 participants and over 200 volunteers to the Northumberland area.

The first-, second- and third-place medals were created and produced by Hoselton studios, in Colborne.

Every participant received a hand-knitted scarf sporting the official green, blue and white colours of the games. The call went out last fall from local volunteer Marg Allison to knitters everywhere, and the response from the community was overwhelming. Help came from as far as away as Calgary to get these memorable keepsakes finished.

I want to thank committee co-chairs Paul Allen and Eugene Todd and their team for their dedication and the hard work they put forth to make these games such a success.

Thanks also to the town of Cobourg and neighbouring municipalities for their contributions and resources, and to our government for continued support for sports.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Mr. Norm Miller: Earlier this year, the Globe and Mail concluded a special report that revealed that one in

five sexual assault claims in Canada are dismissed by police as "unfounded," meaning the investigator does not believe a criminal offence occurred or was attempted.

It was heartbreaking to learn that two communities in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka are ranked the third- and fifth-highest in Canada for dismissing sexual assault claims. In both Bracebridge and Huntsville, over half of the allegations made by sexual assault victims are turned away by police. Sadly, many of these victims are often not provided with connection to meaningful community supports that could assist them when the legal system cannot.

The high rate of dismissal does nothing to deter potential assailants and may discourage even more victims from reporting to police.

While the statistics are difficult to hear, they offer an unprecedented opportunity for change at the level of police investigations of sexual assault. At least 32 police departments across the country have committed to reviewing their data, with the OPP reviewing 4,000 sexual assault investigations. These are positive steps, but more needs to be done.

It is my hope that police services will understand and appreciate the role of other community services to assist victims and support them in the rebuilding of their lives in the face of such extreme trauma.

In light of the Globe and Mail report and other various headlines related to sexual assault across the country, we need to ensure that our discussions do not rely on harmful stereotypes and that they are always structured respectfully.

Sexual assault survivors must be taken seriously. Anything less is simply unacceptable.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Catherine Fife: Recently I had the opportunity to reconnect with some former colleagues and parents who are active in the education world. It didn't take long for the issue of school closures to come up. Speaking as a former trustee, school closure meetings are a special kind of emotional labour for all board members and the community. And the process has not gotten any easier, because this provincial government has never fully reviewed the education funding model nor made any significant financial commitment to the much-talked-about concept of community hubs.

Within this context, the Ottawa board, like many boards, faced an impossible decision to close an under-capacity Rideau High School. By all accounts, Rideau is a true community school, particularly for new immigrants, refugees, those living in poverty, and indigenous people. In fact, several First Nations community organizations looked to partner with the board and lease space.

One of the courageous students at the board meeting asked, "Why are you going to take away our school during this fragile period of reconciliation?"

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was clear that education plays a crucial role on the road to equality and success for indigenous peoples.

Senator Kim Pate wrote that “quality education is not a one-size-fits-all recipe and must be adapted to meet different needs.” But school boards across this province are penalized for trying to find creative options, and they are rewarded financially for closing schools by this government.

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The promise of larger schools for everyone is not the answer.

This government needs to wake up to the fact that, incredibly, 227 schools have closed just since 2011.

Speaker, we must get this right. Public education is the great equalizer, and we all need to be part of the solution going forward.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On Saturday, March 11, I had the privilege of recognizing the contributions of 16 outstanding Barrie residents by presenting them with the Leading Women/Leading Girls, Building Communities Award. These ladies exemplify community leadership, volunteerism and advocacy and have become mentors to many through their dedication to improving the lives of women and girls.

Among them was Eileen Bethune, who has volunteered almost 1,700 hours to Big Brothers Big Sisters over nine years while also donating her time to Gilda’s Club, Out of the Cold, her church and local library.

Giselle Bodkin has raised over \$400,000 through the Women’s inTuition fundraising campaign for a scholarship that goes to young women with financial needs studying at Georgian College.

Diane Kyd, Laura Wilson and Elizabeth Campbell were all recognized for their many years of contribution to the Camphill Communities for the developmentally disabled, including the establishment of a retail store which showcases artwork and other products created by the residents of their community.

Meagan Reid of West Bayfield Elementary School was honoured for her many contributions to her school community and for the work she has done with the local hunters and anglers conservation club’s youth program.

Arlene McKenzie was recognized as a founding member of the Barrie Native Friendship Centre, as well as for her tireless efforts to improve services for the native community. Through her efforts, the native community now has an emergency food bank, they have access to free clothing, and there is now an aboriginal health care professional that the community can access.

These are just a few of the honorees who received this award in my community. It was a privilege to recognize the outstanding contributions that all of these women have made. Thank you, and congratulations.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: As members will recall, on October 26, the government announced plans to establish a new

university campus in Halton region. I’m pleased to inform the House that, according to published reports, it appears that Wilfrid Laurier University, in partnership with Conestoga College, was the only applicant to respond to the government’s recent call for formal expressions of interest to construct a new Halton post-secondary campus.

According to the Milton Champion, the government will now consider the Laurier-Conestoga submission and work with them to continue to develop their plan before an invitational call for proposals in July. The successful proposal is expected to be formally announced in the fall. The new campus is projected to accommodate 1,000 students within two to five years of opening.

As one of the four MPPs who are privileged to represent parts of Halton region, I welcome this news. Working together with Wilfrid Laurier University, our local municipal officials, including Halton regional chair Gary Carr and other partners, we have pushed for a new campus in Halton region for some time. I want to thank them all for their outstanding efforts, which now have us one step closer to achieving our goal.

Halton region is one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario. Our young people will benefit from having another post-secondary option close to home as they reach out to the promise of the future. We urge the government to keep this project moving forward.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Last Tuesday, first responders were called to the scene of two separate accidents that took place on the 401 eastbound highway. The icy roads and blowing snow resulted in a crash involving more than 30 vehicles and a chemical spill of hydrofluoric acid. The tragedy resulted in injuries sustained by 28 people, and, sadly, one man passed away from his injuries.

In my community, it never takes long for everyone to swing in to help. The first responders, like the Ontario Provincial Police and Frontenac paramedics, rushed to the scene, and my understanding is that many of the victims were decontaminated at the Leeds-Grenville fire station before they were sent to Kingston General Hospital. A decontamination tent was set up in a very short period of time, and many workers at KGH stayed late, worked through their breaks and even came in on their day off to care for those who needed it.

This tragedy saw our community come together as other local hospitals, like the Hotel Dieu and Providence Care, extended their hours and offered beds to support KGH in dealing with this tragedy. The McMaster emergency room even responded by offering to send pizza to the workers as they cared for the patients.

The men and women who worked tirelessly during this emergency and worked to support front-line staff are some of the finest. In fact, each one is a hero in my community. It is my honour to rise in the House today to acknowledge them and thank them for their services.

Thank you all for your seamless, compassionate and heartwarming response to what could have been a much worse tragedy.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: Over the past months, I've been speaking with constituents and attending meetings in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound about the state of our seniors care in long-term care, namely about the future of Rockwood Terrace in Durham and Grey Gables in Markdale, which are home to 160 seniors. I received great feedback and promised to bring their concerns to the floor of the Legislature. As such, I rise today to urge the government to make seniors' access to long-term care a priority.

This morning I also joined the Ontario Long Term Care Association as they announced that 11,000 concerned Ontarians had signed their petition to call on the government to commit to better seniors care. This is evidence of the fact that this government has seriously abdicated its responsibility to properly fund long-term care, leaving hundreds of thousands of seniors to go without the care they need and deserve.

The fact of the matter is that the wait-list just hit a new record high, with 26,500 seniors across Ontario going without a long-term-care bed, a number that will double to 50,000 in several years. Yet this government refuses to commit to adding new beds to accommodate this growing need.

The fact is that one in five seniors in long-term care are malnourished because of chronic underfunding by this government. I don't know how this government can sit back and watch the grey tsunami coming at it and not address it.

My constituents, as well as every one of the 11,000 Ontarians who signed the petition, believe that long-term care is going to only get worse unless the government takes action now. I believe our seniors deserve better: They deserve better care, better services and better standards, especially in food and hydro.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone who signed the petition and for doing their best to support our seniors, and I call on the government to do the same by taking action on those needs in long-term care.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that “the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Thursday, November 17, 2016, as required by the standing orders of this House. Pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates for 2016-17 of these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qadri: 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. I send it to you by way of page Keira.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultation 2017 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milczyn presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-budget consultations throughout December and January. Public hearings were held in Toronto, Dryden, Sudbury, Ottawa, Windsor, Brampton and London. The committee heard 157 presentations and received some 90 additional written submissions from agencies, associations, community groups, municipalities, organizations, unions and individuals. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank each and every one of them for taking the time to share their views with the committee.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee and especially the members of staff for their commitment, hard work and co-operation.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1476283 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2017

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr60, An Act to revive 1476283 Ontario Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

564539 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2017

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr59, An Act to revive 564539 Ontario Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

RENT PROTECTION FOR ALL TENANTS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ENCADREMENT DES LOYERS POUR TOUS LES LOCATAIRES

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 to extend rules governing rent increases to certain types of rental units / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation afin d'étendre les règles régissant les augmentations de loyer à certains types de logements locatifs.

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. Peter Tabuns: This bill will ensure that buildings built after 1991 are covered by rent control, and thus protect tenants.

ONTARIO CRAFT BEER WEEK ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA BIÈRE ARTISANALE EN ONTARIO

Mr. Rinaldi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Ontario Craft Beer Week / Projet de loi 107, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la bière artisanale en Ontario.

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. Lou Rinaldi: The bill proclaims the week commencing the second Sunday of June in each year as Ontario Craft Beer Week.

NO FLAK FOR CARRYING RACKS ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT), 2017

LOI DE 2017 INTERDISANT LES OBJECTIONS AUX SUPPORTS DE TRANSPORT (MODIFICATION APPORTÉE AU CODE DE LA ROUTE)

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to end flak for carrying racks / Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour mettre fin aux objections aux supports de transport.

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. Norm Miller: I'd like to thank my legislative intern, Hannah Forsyth, for her work on this bill. It's the No Flak for Carrying Racks Act (Highway Traffic Amendment), 2017. The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act: If a carrying rack, such as a bicycle rack, is mounted on the rear of a motor vehicle in accordance with the regulations made under the act, a person may drive the vehicle on a highway even if the rack obscures the number plate for the vehicle that is required to be attached to the rear of the vehicle.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Liz Sandals: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding changes to the membership of standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

That on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Potts replaces Mr. Delaney; and

That on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Delaney replaces Mr. Potts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board moves that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

That on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Potts replaces Mr. Delaney; and

That on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Delaney replaces Mr. Potts.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Avant de commencer, j'aimerais prendre le temps de souligner la présence ici d'Eric Minoli, Laurent Guérin et Carole Nkoa, qui sont ici pour démontrer leur engagement à la francophonie. Je vous remercie de votre présence, mais aussi de votre engagement au sein de notre francophonie ontarienne.

Monsieur le Président, nous célébrons aujourd'hui avec fierté le 20 mars, la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Cette célébration revêt cette année une signification particulière pour la francophonie ontarienne, puisque l'Ontario est maintenant un membre observateur de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

Nous faisons donc maintenant partie des 275 millions de personnes qui parlent français et qui forment la famille élargie de la Francophonie internationale. De par son adhésion à cet organisme prestigieux, l'Ontario va à la rencontre de cette communauté mondiale, unie par une langue commune tout en étant composée de cultures diverses.

Cet élan de solidarité envers cette francophonie aux visages multiples d'ici et d'ailleurs cadre parfaitement avec le thème central de l'édition 2017 de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, soit : « J'aime, je partage ».

Vous me permettrez de reprendre les propos de Son Excellence Michaëlle Jean, la secrétaire générale de la Francophonie, qui nous convie au « grand rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir, à l'échelle de la planète, le grand rendez-vous d'un nouvel humanisme qui se dit aussi en français ».

L'entrée officielle de l'Ontario dans la Francophonie internationale signifie qu'il nous appartient de partager

l'histoire, les couleurs et les accents de notre francophonie avec le monde entier.

Je veux profiter de cette tribune aujourd'hui, monsieur le Président, pour rappeler ma fierté et celle des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes quant à notre langue maternelle : le français. Elle est la deuxième langue la plus enseignée dans le monde. Elle est la troisième langue des affaires. Elle se parle sur cinq continents. Elle a donné des milliers de mots à d'autres langues, en particulier à l'anglais, et elle est, bien sûr, une des deux langues officielles du Canada. Elle témoigne aussi de l'histoire et du parcours des peuples francophones partout dans le monde.

Ici, en Ontario, il faut donc prendre acte du chemin que nous avons parcouru depuis plus de quatre siècles de francophonie. C'est pour cette raison que nous profitons du 150^e anniversaire de l'Ontario pour ériger, à quelques mètres d'ici, un monument provincial. Ce monument va être situé sur la pelouse ouest de l'entrée principale des terrains de Queen's Park, à une des intersections les plus visibles et prestigieuses de la ville de Toronto.

Ce monument sera un trait d'union entre le passé et l'avenir. Il rendra hommage aux femmes et aux hommes qui ont contribué à construire une francophonie résiliente et qui ont activement participé au développement et à la croissance de la province. Il témoignera aussi du monde qui s'ouvre devant nous et du chemin que rêveront les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes de demain.

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En cette Journée internationale de la Francophonie, ce « grand rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir » dont parle M^{me} Jean passe aussi par l'apport des nouveaux arrivants à la vitalité de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Monsieur le Président, nous gardons fermement le cap sur notre cible de 5 % d'immigration francophone en Ontario. Nous y tenons. Et le gouvernement continue de prendre des mesures en ce sens, tout en continuant d'alimenter le dialogue avec les chefs de file de la francophonie ontarienne.

D'ailleurs, à la fin de ce mois, ma collègue la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration, Laura Albanese, et moi-même participerons au forum sur l'immigration francophone qui se tiendra à Moncton, au Nouveau-Brunswick. Ce sera là une première rencontre officielle entre le forum fédéral, provincial et territorial des ministres de l'Immigration et celui des ministres de la francophonie canadienne. L'Ontario entend déployer les efforts nécessaires de concertation et de collaboration pour faciliter l'atteinte de notre objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone.

Appartenir à la Francophonie internationale, c'est aussi une occasion pour nous d'ouvrir les bras à la jeunesse du monde, en amenant plus d'étudiants et d'étudiantes francophones de l'étranger à acquérir une formation supérieure en français dans nos collèges et universités. Nous pouvons être fiers de la qualité de nos institutions francophones et bilingues, de nos collèges et universités francophones.

J'aimerais également reconnaître le Groupe média TFO qui, depuis 30 ans, joue un rôle important dans la préservation et le développement de la francophonie ontarienne, et même au-delà de nos frontières.

Avant de conclure cette brève allocution, monsieur le Président, j'aimerais vous rappeler le grand moment d'émotion que nous avons vécu récemment dans cette Assemblée législative lorsque la chanson « Notre Place » du regretté Paul Demers et du compositeur François Dubé fut reconnue comme hymne des Franco-Ontariennes et des Franco-Ontariens. Cette belle chanson nous rappelle notre sens d'appartenance profond à l'Ontario et l'espace à part entière que la communauté franco-ontarienne y occupe dans le présent et dans l'avenir.

« Notre Place », cette chanson emblématique, nous rappelle que l'Ontario est notre place et que l'avenir nous appartient. Aujourd'hui, je tiens à vous remercier, chers collègues de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, de votre appui indéfectible envers la communauté francophone de la province.

J'invite donc tous les francophones et tous les francophiles à partager leur fierté et leur solidarité envers la Francophonie mondiale en utilisant sur Twitter le mot-clic #mon20mars.

Bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie à vous tous. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

It's now time for members' responses.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Chers collègues, et à tous nos visiteurs qui sont ici aujourd'hui, je suis très fière de parler aujourd'hui au sujet de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Je vous adresse, en ce jour, comme la porte-parole du groupe conservateur pour la francophonie en Ontario.

Avec ma collègue la représentante de Nickel Belt, j'ai eu l'honneur d'assister à la réunion de l'Association parlementaire Francophone, tenue à Québec la semaine dernière. Je suis la représentante pour les affaires des femmes pour les trois partis de l'Ontario, alors ça veut dire pour toutes les Franco-Ontariennes ici en Ontario. Ça m'a donné une occasion de pratiquer un peu mon vocabulaire au Québec.

Je veux dire que mercredi passé était, comme on dit en anglais, le « kickoff » pour la Semaine de la Francophonie à Daniels Spectrum sur la rue Dundas à Toronto. C'était une célébration non seulement pour la journée et la semaine de la francophonie, mais on a aussi célébré le 150^e anniversaire du pays du Canada. Les « hashtag » pour cette journée étaient #JeSuisFranco et #JeSuisToronto.

Monsieur le Président, en tant que représentante du groupe conservateur pour la francophonie en Ontario et en tant que francophone, j'ai déjà eu le plaisir de prendre part à plusieurs de ces événements excitants pendant cette Semaine de la Francophonie. On a plusieurs événements originaux et créatifs qui sont planifiés dans les jours qui viennent dans un nombre varié d'endroits dans notre province.

Le Centre francophone de Toronto, l'Alliance Française de Toronto, le Bureau du Québec à Toronto, Cinéfranco, Radio-Canada, Francophonie en Fête, le Théâtre français de Toronto et le Consulat général de France nous invitent à la Semaine de la Francophonie à Toronto. On est déjà au milieu de la semaine, mais tous les événements ont commencé le 17 et vont finir le 24 mars.

Ces événements couvrent une variété de goûts : cinéma, musique, humour, conférences et théâtre—et pour tous les âges, on a tous ces événements. Pour avoir tous les renseignements, on peut visiter le site Web semainefrancophonietoronto.com.

Je veux dire aussi que cette année, les festivités souligneront également, comme je l'ai dit, le 150^e anniversaire de la confédération, avec des programmes historiques. Non moins de 20 événements au total ont été présentés par plus d'une demi-douzaine d'organismes et associations culturelles de la ville de Toronto : des spectacles jeunesse, de la magie, des projections de films, du théâtre, des séances de réseautage, des concours et des conférences, qui sauront plaire aux petits et aux grands.

Cette semaine exceptionnelle sera clôturée par le concert de Mehdi Cayenne et Yann Perreau, des artistes francophones qui ont beaucoup de talent.

En conclusion, monsieur le Président, je suis heureuse et honorée de pouvoir rapporter que la Francophonie est une communauté vibrante dans le monde, et plus particulièrement, ici en Ontario. Ceci est illustré par le fait que notre Parlement l'a réaffirmé récemment en passant une motion pour instituer « Notre Place », dont la ministre a déjà parlé, comme l'hymne officiel de la francophonie en Ontario.

La semaine passée, j'ai chanté avec les étudiants francophones, pour la première fois, la chanson « Notre Place ». Vous le savez, on ne peut pas chanter ici à la législature, alors j'ai lu les paroles. Mais c'était avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme que les étudiants l'ont chantée. Donc, en ce jour de la Francophonie, je peux vous assurer que l'avenir du français dans notre province est fier, éclatant et sur la place publique. Merci beaucoup—jamais dans la poche.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je commence par souhaiter une bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie à tous mes collègues, à nos visiteurs qui sont venus ici à Queen's Park et à tous ceux qui nous écoutent. Bonne journée de la Francophonie.

J'aimerais également commencer en vous remerciant, monsieur le Président, ainsi que tous les travailleurs de la table des Greffiers, de nous avoir donné—on a un plan de l'Assemblée législative et il est maintenant complètement bilingue, autant les comtés que les ministères, etc., et c'est la première fois aujourd'hui. Donc, je voulais dire merci. C'était une demande que j'avais faite, et vous avez répondu à mes attentes à 100 %. Je vous remercie beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

C'est sûr que lorsqu'on parle de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, on aimerait ça pouvoir célébrer notre fierté. Moi, je vais commencer par passer

un peu au travers des dossiers prioritaires pour le gouvernement provincial. Le plus gros dossier, au provincial, bien entendu, c'est la santé : c'est 50 milliards de dollars. En santé, on se souvient tous de SOS Montfort, où il y a eu un ralliement et un cri de coeur de la communauté franco-ontarienne pour sauver notre hôpital universitaire francophone. Ça a été un succès et maintenant on peut tous être fiers de ce que Montfort est devenu, autant pour la région d'Ottawa, mais vraiment pour tout l'Ontario, avec son mandat universitaire, son mandat d'enseignement, ainsi que les renvois en service qui se font à Montfort.

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Quand on parle de santé, par contre, si on regarde du côté des soins primaires, il y a un modèle qui règne. C'est le modèle des centres de santé communautaire, qui améliore l'accès et garantit l'accès aux services en français lorsqu'on a un centre de santé communautaire francophone. Moi, je viens de ce milieu-là. Je peux vous dire qu'à Timmins, ça fait plus de 10 ans qu'ils demandent un centre de santé communautaire francophone.

Le rapport final intitulé « Examen des services de soins primaires destinés aux francophones de Timmins », qui a été présenté par la firme de consultants PGF et déposé en août 2016—ils veulent la mise en oeuvre. Qu'est-ce qu'ils veulent, vraiment? Ils veulent un centre de santé communautaire francophone. Ça fait plus de 10 ans qu'ils le demandent, eux et plusieurs autres communautés à la grandeur de notre province. Quelle belle opportunité de fierté et de célébration, si on pouvait avoir ça.

Continuons avec les soins. Si on regarde les soins à domicile, le gouvernement avait une opportunité en or de mettre fin aux échappatoires avec le projet de loi 41. J'ai bien présenté plusieurs propositions de changements, mais cette opportunité, le gouvernement ne l'a pas prise. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? Bien, ça veut dire qu'il va continuer d'avoir des travailleurs et travailleuses anglophones qui vont rentrer dans des foyers où on ne parle que le français pour venir offrir des soins à domicile. C'est inconcevable qu'on avait la chance de changer ça et on ne l'a pas fait.

Si on continue avec les soins de longue durée, vous savez, monsieur le Président, qu'il y a 78 000 lits de soins de longue durée. Si tu dis qu'on est à peu près 5 % en Ontario, on devrait avoir au moins 3 900 lits désignés francophones. Oublions ça. On en a 0,0005 % qui sont réservés pour les francophones. Il y a place à l'amélioration. J'aimerais pouvoir célébrer ça et en être fière, mais à part quelques lits à Toronto et quelques lits sur un étage désigné à Hamilton, il n'y a pas grand-chose. Pourtant, on sait que c'est dans la population aînée que l'on retrouve le plus gros pourcentage de francophones unilingues, mais ça, ça ne dérange pas.

Le deuxième plus gros dossier, bien entendu, c'est l'éducation. On est fier de nos écoles francophones, de nos conseils francophones, tant au niveau primaire qu'au secondaire, mais on n'est pas fier de ce qu'on a : une

formule de financement qui nous désavantage, nous, les francophones, et surtout l'enfance en difficulté. Pourquoi est-ce que nos petits francophones n'ont pas droit aux mêmes services que les anglophones pour avoir un avenir meilleur?

On est fier de nos collègues, autant Boréal que La Cité collégiale, mais encore là, les collègues francophones doivent compétitionner l'un contre l'autre. Un collègue, c'est fait pour répondre aux besoins d'enseignement de sa communauté. Si les besoins sont les mêmes dans La Cité qu'à Boréal, ils devraient avoir le droit d'offrir le même programme, comme les collègues anglophones le font.

Ça m'amène, bien entendu, à l'université franco. Partout en Ontario, apprenez-la, la chanson, parce qu'on veut passer de la chanson à l'action. On n'a rien contre l'augmentation des programmes post-secondaires dans le centre-sud-ouest, mais ça ne devrait pas nous empêcher de faire le premier pas, de mettre en place un conseil des gouverneurs pour une université franco-ontarienne.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

Before we move on, I'd like to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. I'd like to give some credit to the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Clerks' table for the translation. I appreciate their efforts to help us do that. Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to correct my record from this morning. I referred to \$10 million and I should have referred to \$1.2 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. All members have an opportunity to correct the record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Very quickly, I'd like to welcome Brooklyn Lampi and her mother, Mariah. They were here earlier. Brooklyn received an Ontario Junior Citizen Award earlier today.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my signature to this as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, but I would like to thank Stephanie and Denis Meilleur from Capreol and Cochrane for sending me the petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in homes within the North East Local Health Integration Network ... have been pressured to move out of the hospital to await placement, or stay and pay hospital rates of approximately \$1,000 per day; and

“Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie have been pressured to move to homes not of their choosing, or to ‘interim’ beds in facilities that don’t meet legislated standards for permanent long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas the practice of making patients remain in ‘interim’ beds is contrary to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care ... policy which identifies ‘interim’ beds as intended to ‘ensure a continuous flow-through so that interim beds are constantly freed up for new applicants from hospitals’;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—Ensure health system officials are using ‘interim’ beds as ‘flow-through,’ in accordance with fairness and as outlined in” Ministry of Health “policy;

“—Ensure patients aren’t pressured with hospital rates and fulfill promises made to hundreds of nursing home residents who agreed to move temporarily with the promise that they would be relocated as soon as a bed in a home of their choosing became available.”

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

GO TRANSIT

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

“Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

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

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.8 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 390,700 of whom are children and youth between the ages of 0-14 living with asthma;

“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;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Ted McMeekin, MPP Jeff Yurek and MPP France Gélinas’ private member’s bill, Bill 71, Lung Health Act, 2016, 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

“As the bill had already been debated at committee in the bill’s original form, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, to expedite through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 71 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition, I affix my signature to it and I will give it to page Ethan.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: C’est mon plaisir d’introduire cette pétition :

« Privatiser Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que la privatisation d’Hydro One est un aller sans retour; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d’Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre le plus gros atout économique provincial et le contrôle de notre avenir dans le secteur de l’énergie; et

« Attendu que nous allons payer de plus en plus pour l’électricité, tout comme ce qui est arrivé ailleurs;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario comme suit :

« D’arrêter la vente d’Hydro One et de faire en sorte que les familles de l’Ontario, comme propriétaires d’Hydro One, en bénéficient, maintenant et pour les générations à venir. »

J’appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et l’envoyer avec le page Matthew.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

“Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

“Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

“Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

“Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

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

“Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

“Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians.”

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker. I’ll put my signature to it and give it to page Keira.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Bill C-14, the federal legislation which legalized medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada explicitly affirms it is not intended to compel anyone to act against their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has adopted the effective-referral protocol for MAID, which may compel health care professionals to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the effective-referral protocol for MAID is globally unprecedented; and

“Whereas there are viable alternatives for the provision of effective access to MAID that would allow all health care professionals to continue to practise with ethical integrity; and

“Whereas this effective-referral-protocol policy may compel health care professionals to make a dehumanizing choice between their profession and faith, conscience or commitment to the Hippocratic oath;

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

“To immediately take action to protect the conscience rights of Ontario’s health care professionals by” eliminating “the effective-referral protocol for medical assistance in dying.”

Mr. Speaker, I’ve signed this in support and will send it with a page.

PRIX DE L’ESSENCE

M^{me} France Gélina: J’aimerais présenter une pétition qui provient de partout dans Nickel Belt et dans le nord-est, et remercier M^{me} Michelle Ellery. Ça dit :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l’Ontario continuent d’être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l’essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d’essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l’essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d’écarts de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d’essence annualisés inférieurs;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à Nicholas de l'amener au Greffier. Merci.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

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

“Whereas home inspections are an integral part of the real estate transaction; and

“Whereas there are no current rules and education system to qualify who is and who is not a home inspector; and

“Whereas the public interest is best served by protecting consumers against receiving a bad home inspection;

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

“Ensure the speedy passage of Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act, 2016, and mandate the government of Ontario to bring in a strong qualifications regime for home inspectors.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it down to the table with page Kishan.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas Ontario’s 627 long-term-care homes play a critical role in the support and care for more than 100,000 elderly Ontarians each and every year;

“Whereas nine out of 10 residents in long-term care today have some form of cognitive impairment, along with other complex medical needs, and require specialized, in-home supports to manage their complex needs;

“Whereas each and every year, 20,000 Ontarians remain on the waiting list for long-term care services and yet, despite this, no new beds are being added to the system;

“Whereas over 40% of Ontario’s long-term-care beds require significant renovation or to be rebuilt and the current program put forward to renew them has had limited success;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care;

“We, the undersigned, citizens of Ontario, call on the government to support the Ontario Long Term Care Association’s Building Better Long-Term Care pre-budget submission and ensure better seniors’ care through a commitment to improve long-term care.”

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Coleton.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

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

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

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

I support this petition, sign my name to it and will send it with page Nicholas.

CURRICULUM

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

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education removed the teaching of cursive writing as a mandatory component of the Ontario education curriculum; and

“Whereas numerous independent psychological studies have proven that the learning of cursive writing at a young age improves cognitive development, improves the development of fine motor skills, creativity, the integration of visual and tactile information; and

“Whereas many students are now reaching their teens and are unable to even sign their name on legal documents, government forms, drivers’ licences, etc., including petitions such as this; and

“Whereas future generations of adults will be unable to not only write in cursive but will be unable to read historical documents, genealogical documents such as birth, death and marriage certificates, prior to the 20th century, which were prepared primarily using cursive, nor will they be able to understand family letters and documents passed from one generation to the next;

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“Whereas the loss of cursive writing represents a significant loss in an important component of our cultural heritage;

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

“That the Minister of Education for Ontario take the necessary action to ensure that the teaching of cursive writing is reintroduced as a mandatory element within the Ontario education system at the early public school level, at the soonest possible time.”

I will affix my signature in cursive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

I know there were a number of members who wanted to get their petitions on. I would remind all members that you don't have to read the whole verbatim account of the petition; you can abbreviate your petition. If we were to do that a little more, maybe we'd all get on each given day that we want to present petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER SCHOOL ZONES ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 21, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'm just waiting to see how much time we've got to go here this afternoon for the remainder of the debate. Oh, it's 49 minutes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Settle in, folks.

Mr. Michael Harris: If folks at home want to get the popcorn ready, get comfortable; get a comfortable blanket on, we're going to talk about photo radar.

It's always great to be back and speaking here in the Legislature, particularly on Bill 65, as the official transport critic for the opposition. Since we last met to discuss Bill 65, the safer schools act, I have had the opportunity to have further discussions with stakeholders on this important legislation, hear their concerns, of course, and drill down into the bill a bit more. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to share some important points here and to hopefully find a more effective way forward that respects our municipalities and the average law-abiding driver here in the province of Ontario, while making our school zones safer places for our children and youth.

When we talk about the driver, they're constantly under attack by this current government. I did a presentation recently to an automotive industry group and we talked about the array of fees—the increase in drivers'

licences. Of course, we still have the outdated Drive Clean program, which has outlived its usefulness. It's still a bit of a cash grab for those who are celebrating their birthday or renewing their vehicle registration.

The most recent one was with regard to the tolls on municipal roads. The government at the time supported tolls until, similar to their hydro scheme, they were polling and saw how negative an impression this had on them, and of course they backtracked on the tolls. But now we're here today, talking about photo radar.

I want to follow up where I left off the last time I spoke. I had really just finished discussing some of the history of automated speed enforcement, or photo radar—I like “photo radar” because I think it's easy; the government, of course, is talking “automated speed enforcement”—and all the concerns that parties have had at some point or another.

I'd like to point out that even the current Minister of Transportation was making headlines just over two years ago that read, “Photo Radar Not Coming Back: Del Duca,” which showed up in the Toronto Sun, the London Free Press, up in Sudbury and all over Niagara Falls. In that particular article, the minister, who is headlining this latest photo radar initiative, was quoted telling reporters that during his mandate as minister “the province doesn't have an interest in returning to photo radar.” He said that back on March 9, 2015. So when you hear the minister indicating a lack of interest, maybe you can better understand why the first directive this legislation makes is not an effort to improve safety, but a direction to eliminate the name “photo radar” altogether in favour of “automated speed enforcement,” as if the change of name makes the idea of unmanned photo surveillance any easier to accept.

If you check the legislation, right under the title, subsection 1(2) reads as follows: “Subsection 7(11.1) of the act is amended by striking out ‘a photo-radar system’ in the portion before clause (a) and substituting ‘an automated speed enforcement system’.”

I don't see the point in playing with the wording here if the real intent is protecting our kids in school. People know and understand what photo radar is, and renaming it simply is not going to change that.

In the end, it doesn't really matter what you call it; the concerns for photo radar remain. In fact, just last year, a Postmedia survey indicated, “Nearly 60% of us in Hometown”—or Toronto, for those that may not know that nickname—“have no desire to see the return of photo radar....” So 60% of people polled by this survey said that in Toronto, we “have no desire to see the return of photo radar compared to just 28% who would welcome the hidden cameras that snap pictures of speeders' licence plates so they can be sent tickets in the mail.”

Again, while we have come two decades since the last photo radar fiasco, the program still has a bit of public relations work to do. There certainly continues to be a lot of negative connotation around automated speed enforcement, and very legitimate grievances against it. So we need to be very deliberate in considering those

concerns before giving municipalities the ability to use photo radar.

Despite the obvious shared commitment to ensuring and enhancing safety for children, parents and teachers alike, those concerns for the photo radar proposal that we see today are rampant. They are rampant, Speaker, due to the fact that this current proposal is written in a way that leaves so many questions unanswered, questions like these: Will school zone enforcement be 24/7, or is it to be just during school hours? Where will signage be placed? What happens to actual police enforcement, which we know is critical still, in our communities—to enforce poor driving behaviours in addition to speeding? Will motorists get tickets for going one kilometre over the limit, or two kilometres or three kilometres? Who gets the ticket: the driver or the owner of the vehicle?

Speaker, I haven't even got to our overwhelming concerns regarding open-ended community safety zones.

On that last question of who ultimately receives the ticket, I know that our friends at the Ontario Trucking Association, while they have noted support for Bill 65, are in fact looking for some answers. Specifically, they've indicated they're hoping to work with the ministry on addressing issues related to who the penalty is actually targeting.

As they note, fines are issued to the owner of the vehicle and not the driver who committed the violation. Consequently, photo radar would do little to alter behaviour and would likely not be viewed as a deterrent, if the monetary fine is not applied to the actual violator. Also, if speeding violations are not assigned to drivers and subsequently shown on the drivers' CVORs, the ability of trucking companies to manage the safety risk associated with making new hires could in fact be compromised.

They have an excellent point. Ticketing the owner of the vehicle is just the first step and does not address the fundamental cause of speeding. It is a slap on the wrist. Most drivers probably won't even take the time to think about whatever moment in time two weeks ago, or maybe even longer, when they were in fact speeding. They'll just pay the ticket and move on.

In cases where the owner is not the operator of the vehicle, which could be a family or industry, we get even further away from solving the problem. Families that lend the car out to their teenaged kid are probably going to just pay the fine for them, eliminating accountability, while, on the other hand, businesses will be on the hook for penalties because their employees broke the law.

Now, there are options to circumvent these concerns, but we don't see them listed here in Bill 65. We could follow a similar path to Australia and New Zealand, for instance, and require that the registered owner of a vehicle identify the driver of the vehicle at the time of the offence. There are safeguards that can be built in to protect against false identification of a driver.

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To be clear: If enhanced safety and traffic-calming measures like photo radar are to have their desired effect,

we need to ensure that speeding violations are attributed to the right person. Otherwise the effect will be lost.

It does not help our society change the behaviour of speeders or help industries hire safe drivers when we are not assigning tickets to the actual motorists. So, while I'm hoping the minister will be open to answering the OTA's call to work on addressing just who Bill 65 is in fact targeting, if we don't look to providing answers to the serious questions that this government's photo radar act has brought to light, we run the risk of running a program of diminishing returns when it comes to safety while government coffers continue to grow—a cash grab, of course, by any other name, Speaker.

Those concerns become even greater when it comes to the lack of answers for questions surrounding what level of speed violation will actually lead to a ticket. Just take the city of Edmonton, for example, where there was an online petition with 20,000 signatures against the growing number of tickets given to those travelling just slightly over the speed limit. In a letter to the Edmonton Journal in 2012, former city commissioner Philip Walker wrote that a “grace” given to speeding motorists had been changed, and that while people were once informally allowed to go 10 kilometres an hour over the limit before being charged, that had been cut to six kilometres an hour.

Are we really trying to ticket people going five or six over the limit—two or three, even? Is that the point of this bill? If not, is there any indication in the legislation guarding against what many would consider an obvious cash grab? Will motorists receive tickets for going, as I said, one, two, or three kilometres over the limit? I think it's important that we protect against these issues, with this government's photo radar bill being little more than a cash grab.

If there was any doubt about the “cash” part of the plan, the numbers reflect the concern. For instance, those in Ottawa monitoring outcomes have noted the statistics between 2011 and 2014 between photo radar in Edmonton and no photo radar in Ottawa. The results are startling. In cities of similar population—Ottawa and Edmonton—records indicate that 10 times the number of tickets were recorded in the photo radar municipality than in the one without photo radar. Here's the main point of concern: The jurisdiction with photo radar—the city of Edmonton—not only had 10 times the number of tickets; they also saw more accidents, more deaths and more injuries compared with Ottawa, where no photo radar existed.

As I noted when we launched debate, our former Solicitor General Bob Runciman captured this concern back in the days of the NDP's failed photo radar mess. He indicated here in the House, close to two decades ago, “We have deemed photo radar to be primarily a cash cow for the NDP and not really having a meaningful impact in terms of road safety.” That quote two decades later perhaps is still justified.

Today, when it comes to concerns or questions about photo radar programs, are they having an effect on improved safety, and at what cost?

As recently as in a 2015 research paper by Pierre Desrochers, *Speed or Greed: Does Automated Traffic Enforcement Improve Safety or Generate Revenue?*, they concluded that despite the use of photo radar in several major Canadian cities, it has shown little credible evidence of actual effectiveness. There are, of course, many studies out there indicating the opposite, but that's why it's so important that we ask those two key questions—"Is it improving safety?" and "At what cost?"—to ensure that when we cut to the bottom of all the studies and rhetoric out there, we are improving the safety of our children in school zones.

It's all about safety, Speaker, and in that context, I would like to look at the impacts regarding actual police officer enforcement. Do we really want to reduce police presence around our schools? Unsafe driving is characterized by much more than just being over the speed limit: drinking and driving; weaving; driving without a licence or insurance; not obeying road signage and red lights; texting while driving is still one of the leading factors in accidents and deaths by motorists here in the province of Ontario; impaired driving—alcohol and now, of course, we're seeing the legalization of marijuana use—impairment by a drug substance is also a leading factor and being abused every day, in fact, by motorists who make that tragic decision to get behind the wheel after a night out with friends.

I did a statement just recently in the Legislature about a terrible accident on Highway 7/8 just outside of Kitchener-Waterloo. A family was travelling home after a day with family. A woman and her son were in the back seat, driven by the father. A drunk driver came up from behind, hit them, and the mother lost her life; the child is still recovering in hospital. So as we continue to become educated, we are continuing to see people make bad choices and those, unfortunately, happen in and around school areas.

I remember back in the days when we had a hydro outage in our subdivision, there was a guy coming home from playing baseball through the day, and he took out about four or five vehicles. He was impaired, and this was right in the middle of the day. So these things are actually happening. All of these driving behaviours put Ontarians in jeopardy and can't be thrown under the umbrella of speeding.

Police provide a vital service in protecting our school zones by deterring and stopping these offences. A box on a pole does not replace a police officer. That is incredibly clear. Beyond the amazing work our police service does in providing mentorship guidance and support to our schools, their presence and their visibility is still crucial to keeping our school zones safe.

I know for me in my subdivision, at J.W. Gerth school, I'll tell you—in the morning my son gets on the bus, but often I drop off my other son at daycare, and it is a zoo around the school, people trying to park or drop kids off. You're not looking at the ability to speed much, just because of the sheer congestion and chaos happening in and around the school. Oftentimes the regional police

are there simply to provide some guidance and deal with aggressive driving. That's important, to see the actual police presence in those school zones.

So police on site will always be a greater influence in changing driving behaviour than automated speed enforcement that sends a ticket to your door weeks later. Beyond stopping speeding drivers in the moment, police often uncover further violations during these speeding stops, like intoxicated drivers, as I mentioned, or those who are driving without a licence. The personal interaction an officer has with a driver they have pulled over is an opportunity for them to make a personal connection and leave a lasting message with that driver about how their actions were detrimental to the community they are in and endangered some of our most vulnerable persons. That is the importance of having law enforcement out there on our streets every day, dealing with behaviours as they exist, not 30 or 45 days after the fact.

So, of course, while photo radar may have some benefit in reducing the burden on the police service, it is not a replacement for officers and the many direct and indirect benefits that having on-site police officers bring. At best, it's a supplementary tool.

As Chris Lewis, former OPP commissioner, has stated in the past, "Traffic enforcement—including photo radar—needs to be about saving lives by changing driver behaviour and/or removing the habitual offenders from the roads by suspending their driving privileges. The ultimate goal is to see police never having to lay a traffic ticket, because everyone is obeying the laws and people are not getting maimed and killed through vehicle collisions. That wouldn't bolster municipal government revenue streams but it would save a pile of lives and reduce the number of grieving families."

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If we are talking about improved road safety due to the reduction in traffic stops on the roadside, again, in the context of this bill, this is not a benefit. You want there to be police on hand to make traffic stops when there is a dangerous driver in a school zone. It's questionable that the issuance of a ticket automatically from a photo radar system weeks later protects the children in that school zone at that moment. There is no question as to the protection that an on-site police officer could provide. These same concerns have been noted time and again.

In fact, while we are considering today's Wynne Liberal government proposal—it wasn't that long ago when the McGuinty Liberals floated the photo radar trial balloon in its early years, prompting our safety groups, like even the CAA, to indicate in 2004 that "photo radar is nothing but a 'tax grab' that does nothing to slow speeding drivers."

Then-CAA spokesperson Mark Arsenaault indicated that "While a marked police cruiser on the side of the road does slow traffic, drivers won't be deterred by receiving a ticket in the mail weeks after speeding past an unmarked photo radar van.

"The only way that this is going to save lives and improve traffic safety is if there's a deterrent involved," he said. "Photo radar doesn't provide that."

Now, Speaker, I think I can safely say that we all support deterring drivers who are violating speed limits around children. We also understand the need to give municipalities the tools they need to maintain a high standard of speed enforcement, while allocating police in a way that takes advantage of their training to the most benefit. But the concerns I'm raising need to be addressed. Photo radar is not a stand-alone enforcement method. At best, it is a complementary tool to the very important work police do.

I just don't want to see this bill, and photo radar, suddenly become a reason to see less police in our school zones, especially during times where there is high foot traffic, just before and after school starts, when families are bringing their kids to school for the day.

I'll tell you, in my subdivision, when I see a cruiser coming in around our court—I love seeing the police in our community. I don't get a chance to see them enough—maybe that's because I'm not home all that often—but I am refreshed to see a cruiser at least doing a patrol. Last week, I did see them dealing with aggressive driving in our subdivision. Of course, most of them are our neighbours, who should know better, but it is great to see police actually in our communities.

I was talking to some of my colleagues earlier and they noted, down south, for instance in Florida, that enforcement mechanisms that the police do in and around school zones are intense. They don't have photo radar, but they have aggressive patrolling by actual law enforcement. And people darn well know, especially during school hours, if they're entering a school zone, if they're not following the speed rules, that they're going to get pulled over by a trooper or a police officer in the United States. I think that they handle things slightly different than they do here in Ontario.

Interruption.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You can hear sirens right now.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, it could be one of them coming right now.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: They're coming to get you.

Mr. Michael Harris: No, they're probably actually coming to get you guys.

Anyway, I will say, though, that there was a study from York University and the Hospital for Sick Children that has stated that the most dangerous part of a child's day is during that morning drop-off period. It's crucial that we continue to have that police presence, in conjunction with photo radar. I can certainly see that helping us cover more ground in protecting our schools.

I want to reinforce, we, as the official opposition, led by Patrick Brown, are adamant: We need to do anything and everything to make our school zones safe, for the sake of our children, their brothers and sisters, and our families. We need to do everything we possibly can to keep them safe.

That said, Speaker, given the high traffic times identified by the York study and given our shared aim to protect our children and their comings and goings from school, I continue to look to the minister to address the

issue of timing; that is, does the photo radar as outlined in Bill 65 snap pictures all day long, or just during school hours when the stated aim of this bill is most readily achievable? Again, if government is proposing a 24/7 photo radar surveillance system, it again highlights questions as to whether the true aim of this bill is to keep our children safe or to keep the fines revenue flowing in. Which one is it?

Perhaps during their response, they can answer that question. That would be number one: Is the true aim of the bill to keep our kids safe, or to keep fines flowing in—didn't get the tolls; said yes to the tolls; backtracked on the tolls; said no to the tolls; now you are saying photo radar. Is it about the money or is it about safety?

Again, I think we can all understand the need for safety enhancements for children during the school day. I know, myself, as a father—and I did highlight this not too long ago. My son Murphy is five and is now off to school, and loves getting on the bus. His brother, Lincoln, can't wait to join him on the bus next year. I am out frequently, when I'm at home, to be able to take him to the bus. It's unfortunate that we have seen a couple of incidents that were close calls. Soon after they got off the bus one day, a young kid in a vehicle actually passed the bus. Now, the bus had just started to take off—signs came in, and passed the bus. That was pretty scary. I don't know if the driver would have been speeding at that point—possibly—but that is an example of when I would have loved to have had a police officer close by because he or she would have dealt with that behaviour right then and there. A ticket, potentially, 45 days down the road given to the parents wouldn't have connected the behaviour challenge at the time with the infraction.

I will commend my seatmate and colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex, when it comes to school safety. It's something that we encourage the government to adopt. A lot of motorists are in fact passing or blowing by school buses when they have their stop arm out. Of course, my colleague has a bill brought forward. This is the second time now we've debated it. It passed second reading; it's in committee. It's a great initiative when it comes to actually keeping kids safe. I welcome the government to adopt an initiative like that. We asked for them to do that in Bill 31. They didn't do that. We wish they would have, to allow for photo evidence to be used when people blow by school buses. I think it's such a practical solution to an actual, major problem we have in the province when people are blowing by school buses when their signs are out. This bill has been a long time coming. The government didn't adopt it in Bill 31, but, again, initiatives like that, to keep our kids safe, are actual changes that we need to do.

Again, Speaker, we understand the need for enhanced safety on the roads when it comes to children in school zones, and I want to reinforce that all day long. It's the related, unanswered questions pointing in other directions where we continue to have concerns. I will say, right here and now, that what is most concerning is this legislation's direction when it comes to the creation of the undefined designation of "community safety zones."

Speaker, while the government has chosen to identify Bill 65 as a Safer School Zones Act, they've attempted to hide the fact that in addition to school zones, according to the way the legislation is currently written, photo radar could be implemented pretty much anywhere a municipality sees fit to place it. That is a problem.

To make it clear, with Bill 65 as it is currently written, the Wynne Liberals are ushering in legislation that could put photo radar cameras on highways right across this province. While they make a good show of speaking to the need to have safer school zones, when you read to the bottom of the bill you realize quickly that school zones are only a small part of an initiative that will see expressways and parkways throughout the province hit by photo radar. That's a throwback to the NDP days where we saw photo radar right across this province.

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Specifically, Bill 65 indicates that, "An automated speed enforcement system may be used in accordance with this part and the regulations made under it,

"(a) in a community safety zone designated by bylaw...."

So just what is a community safety zone? Perhaps question number two for the government: During their rotations, maybe they can actually answer the specifics on what a community safety zone actually is.

If you check section 214 of the Highway Traffic Act, you get a bit of an eye-opener. The HTA indicates that, "The council of a municipality may by bylaw designate a part of a highway under its jurisdiction as a community safety zone if, in the council's opinion, public safety is of special concern on that part of the highway." The translation is: Community safety zones are anywhere a municipal council says they are. There is no definition, no standards and no regulations. Basically, Bill 65 allows municipalities carte blanche as to where or what a community safety zone—and, therefore, a potential photo radar zone—actually is.

Now, I know many of you probably haven't read this bill. I'm hoping you're listening clearly with regard to this one-hour debate. I think many of you tomorrow in caucus will say, "Guys, I listened thoroughly to the opposition yesterday"—that being today—"and his arguments on Bill 65, and I am concerned that this bill forgets about school safety zones and potentially creates a major problem for all of us now that photo radar could be back on Ontario highways."

Mr. Randy Hillier: Will be back.

Mr. Michael Harris: Absolutely. I think, like tolls, there's a potential for a backtrack here. I'm quite okay with that. I think Ontarians would be happy to know that—look, keep it focused on school safety zones, get rid of it on Ontario highways, but that's where they're going with this.

Again, basically Bill 65 allows municipalities carte blanche as to where and what a community safety zone—and, therefore, a potential photo radar zone—actually is. The very fact that municipal officials are already lining up to propose cameras in areas well outside of school

zones highlights the importance of getting this right to avoid concerns of a cash grab, and the ministry's clarification on this matter has only further highlighted this concern.

I was looking for an article here that was published in Hamilton—this was the Stoney Creek News: "Are Red Hill, Lincoln Alexander Parkways Eligible to Be Safety Zones to Allow Photo Radar?" Good question.

"Hamilton politicians agreed to designate the Lincoln Alexander and Red Hill parkways as 'community safety zones' so the municipality can use photo radar devices." Oh, my gosh. Jeez, we're talking about the Lincoln Alexander Parkway and the Red Hill Parkway as a community safety zone?

Here's another one: "At least one councillor says provincial rules could stretch to include the Linc and Red Hill.

"Hamilton should explore using new provincial rules around photo radar to add cameras on city parkways, says a city councillor."

Now, back to the ministry's clarification on this matter and the highlighted fact that there is a concern: the Hamilton Spectator quoted the MTO's Bob Nichols as clarifying that a community safety zone "must be a section of public road within the municipality's jurisdiction." Again, quite simply, this is virtually any road in a municipality. That's a dangerous amount of power to hand over.

Look, the reality is that municipalities are desperately looking for new revenue mechanisms as a result of chronic Liberal underfunding, and we're always open to discussion on how to make school zones safer. However, we're not prepared to sign off on legislation that gives such sweeping powers of photo radar fines anywhere a municipality sees fit—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. There's a cacophony of voices—both sides of the House—interrupting the member for Kitchener-Conestoga. I need to hear the member. He has the floor, and I would ask the members to respect that.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Look, the further we fall into the community safety zone rabbit hole, the greater the concern that the good intent of this bill to protect our school-aged kids is diverted into a catch-all cash grab. That's what it is. There needs to be some kind of check-and-balance around how community safety zones are defined, so that they aren't just another tool to bring money into city hall.

These zones should be used for protection of our vulnerable persons around daycares, seniors' homes, playgrounds and hospitals. Where municipalities are already using community safety zones in this way, that should be encouraged. But we need the assurance that they will continue to be used in responsible, sustainable ways that don't punish good drivers on the local parkway.

We can already see this kind of concern on the over-extension of community zones, even though the legisla-

tion has not even passed. Again, the city of Hamilton has already started the process of considering the designating of municipal expressways as community safety zones, with the expectation of installing photo radar, if the legislation passes.

Here again is the article in the *Stoney Creek News*, on November 14: “Are Red Hill, Lincoln Alexander Parkways Eligible to Be Safety Zones to Allow Photo Radar?”

“Hamilton politicians agreed to designate the Lincoln Alexander and Red Hill parkways as ‘community safety zones’ so the municipality can use photo radar devices....

“Hamilton doesn’t have any community safety zones. A 2001 report from city staff recommended against installing them.”

Here is a bit from the *Hamilton Spectator*: “Photo Radar Poised for a Comeback in Hamilton.

“At least one councillor says provincial rules could stretch to include the Linc and Red Hill....

“The province rejected a city council request earlier this year for permission to use photo radar on the collision-prone Lincoln Alexander and Red Hill Valley parkways.” So they’ve said no to it before.

“But the proposed new rules” here in Bill 65 “leave the door open to a ‘novel’ use of the community safety zone designation to install highway cameras, argued Councillor Sam Merulla.”

There you have it, Speaker. It doesn’t get more black and white than that. Just days after Bill 65’s announcement and there are councillors out there, already eager to see where they can place what may be little more than a cash camera. The very fact that municipal officials are already lining up to propose cameras in areas well outside of schools highlights the importance of getting this right, to avoid concerns of a cash grab.

And it’s not just in Hamilton. There is Allen Road, here in Toronto—most people probably are familiar with it—from Eglinton Avenue West to Transit Road only, a municipal road; Black Creek Drive, Toronto, from Maple Leaf Drive to Weston Road, the compromise for the cancellation of the Highway 401 extension; Burlington Street, Hamilton, from west of Kenilworth Avenue to the QEW only; and the DVP, the Don Valley Parkway, here in Toronto—a municipal highway—from the Gardiner Expressway to Highway 401. The entire length of the DVP could in fact be a community safety zone designated by the council in a bylaw, with photo radar flashing all the way down it. They said no to tolls, but they’re going to get it on the photo radar.

Dougall Parkway, Windsor, from Howard Avenue to Highway 401 only—and the government is saying, “Oh, look. Even if we do put in photo radar, nobody will get tickets because it’s a parking lot.” You know, that’s a problem in itself that they haven’t addressed for 14 years. That’s a poor excuse perhaps for saying, “Don’t worry. Even if we put photo radar on, you’re not going to get a ticket, because you’re parked all the time.”

E.C. Row Expressway in Windsor also turns into a two-lane freeway. There is Highbury Avenue in London,

from Highway 401 to Hamilton Road only; the Kingston Road diversion, formerly Highway 2, in Scarborough, a 3.4-kilometre, 2.1-mile expressway from Lawson Road to Highway 401; and Ontario Highway 27, Toronto, in between Highways 407 and 401.

Of course, you all know the Gardiner Expressway, Toronto. From the DVP to Highway 427, its entire length, another municipal road, could be designated a community safety zone. Photo radar—boom.

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Lincoln Alexander Parkway in Hamilton; the Red Hill Valley Parkway in Hamilton; Regional Road 174, the Queensway east from the 417 to Gloucester to Trim Road in Orléans—all municipal roads. These are highways that the government wants to now put photo radar on.

I think one of the first things we should do in committee is just change the bill title from Safer School Zones Act to the photo radar cash grab act—that’s what we should change bill title to—because it’s being hidden by the fact that they want to put these up in school zones.

Look, we agree with keeping our school zones safe and any measure that will keep our children safe, but what they’ve done is they’ve taken advantage of the goodwill people have for keeping our kids safe and have now extended the ability for photo radar to be on our highways—photo radar back on our highways.

Back to Hamilton, an interesting note on the proposal: If approved, this community safety zone and photo radar would be placed on the two parkways in Hamilton that the Minister of Transportation denied permission for photo radar use on last year. The very roads that he said no to, he’s now saying yes to through his own bill. I just don’t get it; I don’t understand. The ministry can talk about empowering municipalities and providing tools all at once, but you have to wonder about handing the power to the cities to place photo radar systems on roads that were just denied that permission after assessment by the Ministry of Transportation.

The fact is that there needs to be a serious discussion as to what a community safety zone is and how photo radar would work in that zone before government should ever be considering signing off on such a massive transference of power. Speaker, there are no parameters on the size and extent of community safety zones, nor is it explained how roads or groups of roads are dealt with. Any number of streets in a given area could see speed reductions, including ones that would not be clear targets of the designation. Would all roads in the community safety zone be covered by photo radar, if implemented, or only specific roads chosen by the municipality? What sorts of measures are going to be put in place to warn drivers that they are entering a community safety zone while travelling along the same road that is in a community safety zone at one point and out of it at others? There are just too many questions to be asked at this point, and seemingly no answers from the government.

Look at the region of Waterloo. We’ve got three cities: Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. You’ve got King Street that runs through all three. One could be desig-

nated a community safety zone in this part; Kitchener may not; Waterloo may not. That creates a massive problem right across the province by having this hodge-podge of inconsistencies from one municipality to another.

On the last point, warnings for drivers and signage, here, too, the issue of community safety zones looms. We could have situations where a roadway may not be designated as a community safety zone in one municipality, as I mentioned—possibly King Street—but then when a motorist crosses over into the neighbouring municipality, they are in the zone, subject to photo radar and possibly immediate reduced speed limits. You could have photo radar set up in one community that's about two kilometres over. You'll get a ticket. The next one is four kilometres. The next one is five or six. It's a complete mess.

We could have situations where a roadway may not be designated as a community safety zone, again, in one municipality. These constant speed changes on the same road make it unlikely a driver will be able to notice and react to speed threshold changes multiple times. Are the cameras going to be on the perimeter of the zones or are they to be placed throughout? Again, when it comes to issues of signage, where will signs be placed, and how often? What will they indicate?

Speaker, when it comes to Bill 65's direction on photo radar for community safety zones, I think it's glaringly obvious that much more work needs to be done before this legislation is ready for prime time. It's just not ready for prime time. It's bad. And until the government is prepared to remove or define just what a community safety zone is, I think it's safe to say that we aren't prepared endorse a "photo radar anywhere" approach—not us. I think the real question here is why the minister didn't stop at school zones. Had he, we would have likely not even be standing up talking for an hour on this today. Why, if he really wanted to make safer school zones, as the bill's title suggests, didn't he stop at school zones instead of opening the door to implementation of photo radar on highways right across the province of Ontario?

Speaker, there are many questions we need answers to, including 24/7 enforcement, signage, in-person police enforcement, the minimum speeding offences to be ticketed, and who gets the ticket. But the fact is, while we await those answers, the addition of undefined "community safety zones," allowing photo radar anywhere in a bill purported to create safer school zones, will continue to be problematic until it is addressed.

Do you know what? This is the second session of Parliament. This is the minister's—I think he's going into his third year as minister. I know he was handed down Bill 31, a safe roads act, a multi-pronged bill that our opposition supported—a lot of mechanisms, in fact, from our members: slow down, move over; increased fines for impaired driving—a lot of great road safety initiatives. There were others that we wanted to include in that bill, including, from my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, a fine if you're not properly clearing off your truck and snow comes off. A lot of accidents have

happened like that. I talked about the safety camera bill that my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex put forward to protect school kids on buses and to penalize those who continue to blow by buses.

Of course, I put forward my Safe Roundabouts Act, something that I think keeps our community safe by injecting rules into the Highway Traffic Act and actually clearly explaining what roundabouts are. That was a good bill. I know that that was adopted from another minister—I think maybe even two. I would have hoped that the minister would have brought something more substantial for our roads to keep people safe in the province of Ontario on our roadways, including schoolchildren. This is what he brought forward. He brought forward a Safe Schools Act that purportedly attempts to protect our kids in our schools, and we were absolutely supportive of that portion of it. But then he goes and he adds this craziness of putting photo radar on highways to simply create a cash cow on drivers' backs. That's what he has done here. I would have thought there could have been something more substantial for him to bring forward, but he's probably being forced by the Premier's office to table a bill like this because she said no to the tolls. They're having to come up with something to appease those they've already offended by recently saying no after they had said yes. They come back and they say, "You know what? We're going to increase the gas tax." Well, they actually thought they were getting that too. They thought they were getting the tolls and the gas tax increase. Now they're only getting the gas tax increase, and that's years down the road.

So they said, "Well, look, we'll bring in this bill. We'll call it the Safe Schools Act. We'll play people for the fact that it's going to help our kids in school zones," which we hope it will, and we support that part. "But we're going to fool people and trick them by adding photo radar on Ontario highways right across the province. That's where the actual money is."

Again, while we all support enhanced safety for our children—and I want to reiterate that, and our leader, Patrick Brown, will constantly talk about that—we need to think long-term about what makes areas high-collision zones or more likely to have speeding drivers, and think about more concrete changes that can solve the problems, like intersection engineering and design that provide a solid solution.

Speed of traffic is definitely a concern, yes, but we also need to be thinking about driver error and how we can change roads to prevent driver error leading to collisions. A driver leaving the road, taking a left turn across a path, stop-sign violations, disobeying traffic signals, failing to yield to pedestrians, aggressive driving, driving without a licence, driving while impaired due to substance or alcohol: These are all problems that photo radar does not solve and are potentially more dangerous to our children and other vulnerable persons than someone going a few kilometres over the speed limit. These are offences that need a police officer and real, substantive thought on how we can better design our roads and intersections.

1450

And while we are thinking about it, the minister may want to think about if he really wants to address school safety or if he's more interested in opening the photo radar cash register on highways right across the province. Because that, ladies and gentlemen—and again, I hope that there is a fruitful conversation tomorrow in the Liberal caucus room on Bill 65. I know they probably sold you on the fact that school safe zones were all about the kids and school zones, but it's not; it's about all of those municipal highways in the province of Ontario becoming a photo radar cash register.

So we'll be waiting for the answer, Speaker. I thank you for that hour. I will thank those who are at home watching. We'll continue the debate and listen to the answers the government has.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I wish to welcome again to the Legislature a former member who served in the 30th, 31st and 33rd Parliaments and as Speaker of this Legislature in the 35th Parliament: David Warner, the former member for Scarborough–Ellesmere. Welcome to the Legislature.

Questions and comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to weigh in briefly and take two minutes to make some comments after the well-performed hour from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I appreciated all of his thoughtful words. I also appreciated how well he dramatized so many of them. It was—

Mr. Michael Harris: It was entertaining.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, I was entertained and educated—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Enlightened.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don't know about enlightened, but I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

We are starting the debate about Bill 65, which is the Safer School Zones Act. The member talked about the bill as written and their concerns, but bringing it back to, as he said, the good intentions of this bill—talking about photo radar in school zones, and as he spoke at length about community safety zones and what those could look like, will look like, all of that.

I'm going to weigh in a little bit because I spent years, before coming to this fine establishment, at schools as a teacher and recognizing the importance of keeping those school zones and school properties and areas safe.

I think we're all in agreement here in this Legislature that this should be about our children, that this is about their safety in the classroom and outside of the classroom. I think this bill is an important step, as we need the assurances that drivers are going to be held accountable. We need to know that our children are going to be safe. This is a bill that is in the right direction, and I look forward to participating at greater length in the ongoing debate.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Let me say that I am sitting here chomping at the bit, ready to get involved in the discus-

sion this afternoon on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. It is going to give municipalities the option of various tools to keep their roads safe, their neighbourhoods safe. These include automated speed enforcement, reduced default speed limits and red light cameras.

Speaker, I would I like to speak to Bill 65 from a very local perspective. In Waterloo region, I have been in touch with many of our local municipal leaders: our regional chair, Ken Seiling; Kitchener mayor Berry Urbanovic, who I know is a friend of the member for Kitchener–Conestoga—they went to school together; the mayor of Waterloo, Dave Jaworsky; and our chief of police, Bryan Larkin. Let me tell you that all of them have been very vocal; they are very much in favour of Bill 65, and I hope that the member for Kitchener–Conestoga is aware of that. These municipal leaders and many mayors and councillors and chiefs of police right across the province have spoken to us at AMO and at ROMA. They're advocating in favour of Bill 65. They want to slow down speeders.

In fact, Mayor Jaworsky told me just this past weekend at an event that we attended together—he said, “You know, Daiene, there are some streets in Waterloo region”—and this is on the outskirts—“where speeding is a chronic problem.” He said, “We simply cannot afford to have police at every single street.” He said that having the automated speed enforcement cameras is a way of controlling this. He said, “Imagine if, on one or two occasions, you receive in the mail one of these costly tickets.” That's what it's going to take to change behaviour, and that's what we're looking forward to.

While the member for Kitchener–Conestoga has been repeating this notion of a cash grab, I would encourage him to reach out to our municipal leaders, as I did, to get their point of view. We represent them. I know that they're going to be watching how we vote on this, and I hope that we're all going to vote in favour.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I want to commend our transportation critic on his analysis of this legislation. He has certainly torn it apart and exposed what seems to be a bit of an agenda here. He made it very clear that, as opposition, we certainly support initiatives that help make our school zones safer. This kind of discussion is very important with respect to legislating photo radar and to ensuring that it is applied only to those specific areas where it is required and does not become a cash grab, as was pointed out many, many times by the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

The definition of “community zone”: We have to take a look at this legislation, and an amendment may be in order, because it seems to be wide open to indicate any definition for a community zone, in the hands of our municipal partners. Of course, the temptation for attendant fines with respect to those kinds of designations—you can make a designation, apparently, as I read here, virtually anywhere or virtually everywhere within a municipality's jurisdiction.

We were given the example of Hamilton councillor Sam Merulla. He announced plans, right after this piece of legislation was made known, to designate the Red Hill Creek Expressway as a community safety zone, and to also designate the Lincoln Alexander expressway.

This is ridiculous. This is obviously, as has been explained by our transportation critic, a rather cynical approach just to get the money, and any concern about children's safety would be secondary.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 65. I listened intently to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga when he delivered his one-hour speech on this. I found it interesting, however: He was quite apocalyptic about the nature of this bill and how it would wreak havoc on our roads and in our Highway Traffic Act and be overly punitive to people who actually are speeding.

However, in the course of his debate, he referenced some other initiatives that have been born out of the Conservative caucus that he thinks could add to it, one of which was the initiation of photo evidence, I believe he called them, in school buses. I agree with that. If we can put a couple of cameras on a school bus, then when people rip past school buses when the stop sign is out, we should grab them and we should use that evidence.

But I don't see any difference between using cameras on school buses to enforce the Highway Traffic Act when people blow through a stop sign, and when people are ripping through school zones when kids are present. I can't believe—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Talking about apocalyptic.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is apocalyptic. There are some members, I would imagine, from the Luddite caucus in the Conservative benches that don't understand that this technology can actually help, and it can act as a deterrent. This is common sense here; you guys should realize this.

But what happened was, in the late 1990s, the Mike Harris regime demonized the term “photo radar” to the point where those guys over there can't even say the words “photo radar.” You say that, and you might as well not even get yourself on the road anymore.

It's the use of technology to enforce our Highway Traffic Act, to make people safer. If you're not going to do it, get out of way. But stop pretending that you actually care about making our roadways safer, because you don't.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. We return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for his reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thanks, Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity for other members—I won't list their ridings—to chime in quickly on the leadoff. I think it's important to go through the bill full-scale and highlight what it actually is doing. I think the government is perhaps trying to play a game here by calling it one thing but doing another.

For those listeners with us and those at home: They'll continue to use “automated speed enforcement”; it's actually photo radar. It's the same thing. The first thing they do in the bill is change the term. I wish they would call it what it is: It's photo radar.

What they're trying to do here is extend it to highways in the province of Ontario. I talked about a few of them, and I want people to know exactly which ones they are: Allen Road, here in Toronto; the DVP—they said no to tolls—actually, they said yes to tolls, then no to tolls, and now they're saying yes to photo radar on the DVP; Highbury Avenue in London; Kingston Road in Scarborough; Highway 27 in Toronto; Burlington Street in Hamilton; and my colleague spoke about the Red Hill parkway and the Lincoln Alexander. These are the highways in Ontario that the government wants to put photo radar on. It's not about changing drivers' behaviour; it's about the money. It's always about the money for them. It's always about the money.

As we go through the bill again, we are adamant that we are supportive of school zone measures that keep kids safe. I wish they had just stopped at that, but they didn't. They went further. They're going to put photo radar on highways. It's a cash grab.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wish to stand down the lead of the NDP on this bill. Do I need unanimous consent?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You need to seek the unanimous consent of the House, and the House has to grant it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead for the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to stand down the lead of the New Democrats on this bill. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. Given that it is International Francophonie Day, I will start my debate in French.

On est en train de parler du projet de loi 65, la Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

Le projet de loi est assez simple. Il modifie le Code de la route afin que les municipalités soient capables de fixer des limites de vitesse sur leurs territoires et d'utiliser un système de contrôle automatisé de la vitesse et un système photographique relié aux feux rouges.

Speaker, I'm not sure we have a quorum anymore.

Mr. James J. Bradley: They're just outside.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): They have to be in here. I would ask the table to ascertain whether or not there's a quorum in the House.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. Five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We resume the debate. I look to the member for Nickel Belt, who has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Donc, on vous parle du projet de loi 65, la Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

Le projet de loi est quand même assez simple. En français et en anglais, ça fait à peine six pages—et ça inclut la page couverture et la page explicative. On parle d'un tout petit projet de loi. Mais ce qu'il fait, c'est qu'il traite de la capacité des municipalités de fixer des limites de vitesse sur leurs territoires et de l'utilisation de systèmes de contrôle automatisé de la vitesse et de systèmes photographique relié aux feux rouges.

Ce qu'on fait, plus particulièrement : l'article 128 du code est modifié pour que les municipalités puissent désigner par règlement municipal des secteurs où elles peuvent imposer des limites de vitesse inférieures à 50 kilomètres à l'heure. Ici on parle, bien entendu, plus spécifiquement autour des écoles et des zones scolaires.

On parle également de changer le Code de la route pour y ajouter une nouvelle partie qui autorise l'utilisation de systèmes de contrôle automatisé de la vitesse dans les zones de sécurité communautaire et les zones d'écoles. L'article 12 du code est également modifié afin de permettre au régistrateur d'exiger le retour de plaques d'immatriculation et d'annuler celles qui ne sont pas retournées dans le délai précisé. Les plaques d'immatriculation qui sont endommagées, modifiées ou usées, ou qui se sont détériorées au point où elles ne peuvent pas être photographiées par un système de péage électronique, un système de contrôle automatisé de la vitesse ou un système photographique relié aux feux rouges, si besoin est—il y aura un délai de 30 jours pour faire ça, pour avoir d'autres plaques d'immatriculation.

Dans un dernier temps, le Code de la route est modifié afin de supprimer la restriction prévue au paragraphe 205 voulant que les systèmes photographiques reliés aux feux rouges puissent être utilisés uniquement dans les régions de la province désignées par les règlements. D'autres dispositions sont modifiées en vue de préciser que des renseignements peuvent être indiqués par surimpression sur le recto ou le verso d'une photographie utilisée comme preuve et en vue de transférer au ministre le pouvoir du lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil de prendre des règlements en vertu—bon, tout ça pour dire que ce ne sont pas des gros, gros changements au Code de la route qu'on est en train de faire là.

Dans un premier temps, what the bill does is, it amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow municipalities to set default speed limits throughout a designated area in the municipality instead of being obliged to use the province's default 50-kilometres-per-hour speed limit. We expect municipalities to use those in areas where there are children crossing to go to school, to make our schools and our children safer.

The bill also completely rewrites the Highway Traffic Act photo radar legislation, enabling municipalities to use photo radar to enforce speed limits in schools or community safety zones that are designated under the bylaw of that specific municipality. This is where our colleague had quite a few reservations, because the bill allows the municipalities to do this but does not set any limits as to where, when and how such things could be done. Photo radar will only be allowed in these areas. It says that the province will no longer be able to use photo radar on highways, which it hasn't done since it was shut down in 1995, but it does open the door for municipalities to do the exact same thing that the province will not be allowed to do.

Existing photo radar enforcement in trial procedures that are described in part of the bill are repealed. The province may make a regulation prescribing new procedures. These regulations supersede the Provincial Offences Act in case of a conflict. This happens quite a bit with bills lately—where it gives the government power to do something yet to be defined in regulation, if and when they see fit. The problem is that, as legislators, we get to see the bill; we do not get to see the regulations that follow which can sometimes stray far away from the intention of the bill into areas where, had it been included in the bill, we would have voted against.

The registrar may require the return of plates that have become so damaged or worn that they cannot be photographed by a tolling system, red light camera system or photo radar.

1510

Let me tell you that I don't know who did the last batch of plates in Nickel Belt. Frankly, I haven't done anything different with my car than I have done for the last 40 years or so that I have been a driver, and for some reason, I am through my third set of plates. I keep my cars for a very long time, Speaker, and it used to be that I would buy a car, keep it for 10 years and 10 years later I would buy a new set of plates. Because you have a new car, a new set of plates looks good. But the old ones were just fine; some of them are still in my garage as souvenirs.

But now, it's like every winter, by the time spring comes around—and it's happening on my car again—the paint seems to chip off. First, it's the white paint that goes off, then it's the blue. Then all I have is this perfect piece of metal at the back of my car that nobody could read, even if you had your nose on it, never mind a camera, a police officer or anything of the sort. It has nothing to do with me, Speaker. I drive on the same roads that I used to, the same way that I used to. I don't wash my car any more than I used to, which means never. Yet the licence plates seem to erase themselves by themselves. There's a little bit of work to be done here so that we don't end up buying a whole bunch of plates.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Another cash grab.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My esteemed colleague there is talking about a cash grab. It sure looks like we went on a procurement process that allowed us to maybe buy those

plates a little bit cheaper, but we did not get the quality we wanted with the new supplier, because the plates that are being shipped to Nickel Belt right now are no good. They need to be replaced way too often for my liking. A whole bunch of us end up driving around with plates that nobody can read, and every now and again, we get pulled over for such plates and then have to go get new ones. I am talking from experience.

Another part of the bill: The province will no longer need to make a regulation designating an area where red light camera evidence may be used. This is to see who, basically, speeds through a red light.

With the province's default speed limit, it can be very cumbersome to lower overall speed limits in a municipality since it requires costly new signage everywhere. Many municipalities have sought the authority to set a lower default speed limit in designated areas or in their entire municipality. I can tell you that I represent Nickel Belt. I represent 33 little communities. None of them is big enough to be called a city, a town, or even a village. I guess some of them—Gogama could be called a village. But most of them are very small.

Most have one thing in common: They have either a major highway or regional road going straight through the centre of them. For many of them, that means that this highway or this regional road separates kids from their schools. I will give you a specific example in my riding, in Dowling. Dowling is divided right down the middle, sort of, by Highway 144. Remember Highway 144? That's the highway that goes from Sudbury all the way to Timmins. If you go north of Dowling, there is no shoulder to that highway. There's a whole bunch of moose. There is nothing, not a gas station, not anywhere to stop for 200-and-some kilometres, except for the Watershed, when it's open. But just before this, you have the beautiful little community of Dowling.

On one side of Dowling, the side where the river goes through, is where most people live. A lot of people live on the side of the river. It's a beautiful little community. Then comes the big highway, Highway 144. Highway 144 at this point will not only have the usual traffic coming down from Timmins, but it will also have the traffic from three big mines. If some of you have never seen a slurry truck or an ore truck, they are big, they are massive and they're paid by the load, which means they go really fast. All of these trucks, usually one every two minutes, drive down Highway 144, fully loaded, to go to the smelter and come back as fast as they can to get a reload. They go straight down Highway 144, which divides the community of Dowling. The school in Dowling, the library, the pool, the Tim Hortons—all of the businesses are on one side of Highway 144, and all of the kids, their families—the residents—are on the other side of Highway 144. I'd like to read you a letter that I have got from one of my constituents regarding that. Basically, it's one of my constituents who is worried. I's from Chantelle Gorham, and it reads as follows:

"Hi France! Our daughter attends Larchwood P.S. in Dowling—and since we are from Levack, we drive her to

and from school each day. We have spent the last three years bearing witness to near misses and students dodging cars on foot and bikes to cross Highway 144. At 3:05 when school ends, there is a steady stream of traffic from the various shift changes"—because shift changes happen at about 4 o'clock, so if you want to catch the cage at 4 o'clock, you will be driving down by Dowling to make it to Levack, Onaping and the three mines that are down there. "I have inquired about a crossing guard and was told that since each child can be bused, they are walking/biking to school at their own risk. I am at the point that the risk is simply too great. I have made a request of the school to have the first bus leaving for the day stop and allow the bike/pedestrian traffic to cross—but this seems to be falling on deaf ears. Considering the school, community centre, ball fields, Tim Hortons etc. are located on the opposite side of the highway to most homes—it would seem allogical choice to have a crossover put in (marked crossway with the overhead lights). This would not only help the students in the afternoon, but also the morning. It would also help the community member with a safe and noticeable place to cross, and is located at about the halfway mark"—so there's a grocery store and a pharmacy on one side, and everybody would cross over there to go to the arena, to the pool, to the school, to the Tim Hortons, to everything else that's on the other side of the highway. "Traffic is 60 kilometres an hour in that zone—however from my years of policing, I would easily clock drivers going at 90 kilometres-plus. To have a six-year-old gauge how fast traffic is coming (because it is never clear both ways) is almost impossible—and is sure to lead to tragedy. Can this be done before the beginning of the next school year?"

"I have attached a video of the daily antics I see. Not only is the school not enforcing helmets—there is nobody there to supervise"—because you can see in the video a whole bunch of kids on their bicycles with no bicycle helmets. "They recently sent a letter home to parents explaining that they allow their children to walk or bike to school at their own risk—but I find that risk too great to leave it to a signature of approval on paper."

I am telling you this story, Speaker, because it has to do with speed limits, but it also has to do with every community being a bit different. In that particular community, I have gone to see the Minister of Transportation, who agreed to do a review. At the end of last fall, I was quite happy to see that he had seen it our way: that there should be a safe crossover in Dowling to allow the kids who don't want to take the bus. It seems pretty silly to sit sometimes for a half an hour on the bus, when you can walk across the highway and be at your school in less than five minutes. If you're on your bike, it will take you two minutes to go across, but if you take the bus, you will go zigzag, zigzag, zoom-zoom, back and forth, and it will take you 30 to 40 minutes to get to your school.

When it's really cold, most of the kids take the bus. But I hope spring will finally come to Nickel Belt. We had a beautiful weekend, but we still have lots of ice and

snow. But I can tell you that in the spring, the kids want to walk to school. It's good for them to go for a walk. It's good for them to ride their bikes with their helmets, and I would like to see a crossing on this road, as well as giving the possibility to slow the traffic down. This is one example.

1520

We had another example in Capreol, where Podolsky Mine brings basically all of their ore trucks straight down the main road in Capreol, which means that they go right where the kids walk to go to school—most of the kids in Capreol walk to school. I went and saw what was Falconbridge at the time—it became Sudbury Integrated Nickel Operations, Glencore—and basically made a deal with them that they would stop their trucks going through when school opens and when school ends, so that the kids could safely go. You can see how having flexibility to protect the kids can make a big difference.

We have this bill here that would allow a municipality to set speed limits to protect their residents. In my riding, there are a lot of municipalities—there's no municipality; there's Sudbury and a whole bunch of little towns, villages and communities—that would elect to have lower speed limits than what is presently there, to try to protect the kids. But don't forget, to the Minister of Transportation, that a crossover is the safest way, because then everybody crosses there, there's a flashing light, and it's safe for the kids to go to school. But it's also safe for anybody who wants to go to the Tim Hortons, the arena, the ballpark or anything else that happens to be on one side of the highway while everybody else lives on the other side of the highway. I hope that we can find a resolution to that.

Comme j'avais commencé ma présentation en français et aujourd'hui c'est la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, je vais finir en disant qu'il y a des parties du projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions, qui pourraient être utilisées pour protéger nos enfants et protéger les résidents dans les zones où le danger est plus haut.

Malheureusement, le projet de loi ne parle que de possibilité. Donc, dans le projet de loi lui-même, il ne fait qu'ouvrir la porte à la possibilité de changements. Les changements eux-mêmes seront dans des règlements que nous, comme députés, n'en verront pas. C'est toujours un peu problématique pour un député d'ouvrir une porte quand on ne sait pas exactement où elle va emmener.

Donc, c'est sûr, comme mes collègues partout : La sécurité de nos enfants dans des écoles—il n'y a pas une personne qui va s'astiner avec ça. C'est comment est-ce qu'on le fait pour s'en assurer?

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I rise this time to speak on behalf and in favour of the Safer School Zones Act, Bill 65. As a teacher, I believe that it's very important that this be done. The school that I taught at the year that I was elected to this position is on a very busy street with four

lanes, and it seems that people think that if there are four lanes, they can speed. It is very unsafe. The police do come by there as often as possible, but they cannot be there all the time.

With this bill, a municipality would be able to implement automated speed enforcement, image capture and speed-reading technologies activated by a speed exceeding a predetermined amount, in school zones and community safety zones. Municipalities that choose to implement ASE will be responsible for all aspects of program administration, including the installation of devices, the location selection, and the processing and distribution of evidence and tickets.

I want everyone to listen to this: Municipalities will also keep any revenue generated from speeding tickets. No demerit points can be awarded. ASE—and I want you to listen again—will not be implemented on provincial highways. If this legislation is passed, MTO will lead consultations with impacted stakeholders to develop policy and operational and I&IT—

Interjection.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I sometimes wonder if you can.

Anyway, this includes the consideration of supporting regulatory amendments, program characteristics such as type of ASE technology that may be used, and signage requirements. I urge everyone to support this bill.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's clear that photo radar has made a comeback to Ontario, but it's under this new and unctuous disguise of an "automated speed enforcement device." It's interesting, Speaker. As I've listened to the Liberal members here—every time the words "photo radar" comes up, they begin to gag. It's an "automated speed enforcement device." They cannot actually bring themselves to be forthright with people and call it what it is: photo radar.

Speaker, this is about a cash grab. It's not about safety; this is about a cash grab. This is not about reducing fatalities; it's a cash grab. This is not about reducing collisions; this is a cash grab, as they find new ways to allow photo radar to be installed on Highway 7 in Carleton Place or Perth, or on Highway 41 in Napanee and Cloyne. This bill, the way it is written, will permit photo radar on our roads and highways everywhere in the province. If the Liberal Party was truthful about this bill, if they were—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

If they were forthright about this, they would keep this bill limited to school zones only. But they have not, and that's why the criticism of them bringing back photo radar is factual. They have opened up the door to this criticism, and it's correct to be critical of this bill.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to add my thoughts in response to the remarks made by my

colleague from Nickel Belt on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act, dealing with photo radar. I am glad that she brought up some community examples to remind us of what we're talking about. We've heard a lot of rhetoric in this room today. I think that if we keep focused on the actual—not just on the bill, but on keeping our communities safer, I think that is the conversation we have to be having.

To the point that my colleague had made about concerns about regulations, we have that conversation with every bill that comes forward. Our concerns are that intentions can seep into those regulations, and we don't have the chance to debate or discuss. To the point made by my colleagues from the Conservative Party and their concerns about what really is the government's intent, those are conversations we have to have. I look forward to hearing the government always clearly explain their full intention with things.

Another point that my colleague made when talking about road safety: licence plates. I do hope that we have that conversation. I still have old licence plates that were from my parents' cars. They're souvenirs. You put them up in the garage. But you can't really do that anymore because they aren't made with paint—I am sure someone will correct me. They're adhesives now. They are stickers. When it peels off the plate from general wear and tear and what happens on our roadways, those licence plates are degraded so quickly. It's like they're designed to peel off, and I'm sure that somebody will correct me on that, too. I would love to hear that defended, because now we see, over and over, these peel-off licence plates, which is another example of—well, it just doesn't seem right, and I'd love somebody to address that.

Anyway, I've run out of time. I appreciate the chance to debate.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. The member for St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased you made that choice, I guess. There's competition. We're all so eager to respond to the member. We're all so eager to respond to that.

I think the member has identified, and I give her full credit for this, how serious this particular legislation is in terms of safety. I think others who have watched television and read the news in recent years have been very impressed negatively by the number of people who have been killed, for instance, on the streets of Toronto alone. I'm alarmed when I see that number. Perhaps it's because there's more coverage of it and so on, but it is very serious when I see once a week almost, you turn on a Toronto television station and someone has been killed. This doesn't mean it doesn't happen in rural areas; it does. I know we've had some fatalities in rural areas as well.

School zones are of particular interest because kids in school are often not thinking, first and foremost, of traffic

safety, and drivers who should be watching extra carefully going through school zones sometimes do not. In the community where they might say people have a variety of views on how much speed contributes to accidents and on their own experiences, I think where they do agree, where there's a consensus, is that in a school zone you have to ensure that drivers are proceeding at a speed that is going to be safe for the children.

Now I see in my own community, for instance, a number of flashing signs at the time the schools are emptying or the kids are going into school. As a result, we're seeing fewer of those accidents happening in school zones. I certainly understand why school boards and municipalities would want legislation of this kind, and I support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Nickel Belt to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the member from Barrie, the member from Oshawa, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the member from St. Catharines for their brief comments.

There is an issue with safety around our schools. I gave the example of the small school in Dowling that needs a safe crossover to cross Highway 144 that happens to divide their little community. There are a couple of other communities in Nickel Belt that would benefit from having a speed limit lower than 50 to make things safe. You have to realize that, in Nickel Belt, those are main roads that cross our little communities. When you think main roads in Nickel Belt, you think double-tandem trucks full of ore, double-tandem trucks full of slurry that go straight through our community. They come at 50—really more like 70, and sometimes faster than that. It's pretty hard for a six-year-old to be able to gauge all of this, make its way around and do that safely. We have had unfortunate accidents that have happened, just like everywhere else. This bill opens up the door maybe to make some of the communities in Nickel Belt safer, so it is worth looking at.

When it comes to photo radar, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is right that they don't use this language any more. Photo radar is like selling Hydro One. The Liberals didn't sell Hydro One; they broadened the ownership. The Liberals don't have photo radar; they have automated speed enforcement. But really, Speaker, they're not broadening the ownership of Hydro One; they are privatizing it. They're not doing automated speed enforcement; they are doing photo radar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, the member for Mississauga–Brampton South and the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

This is a continuation of a number of initiatives that have been taken by various governments over the years

I've observed in the Legislature to make Ontario always listed as either the first- or second-safest area for driving in all of North America. That's a record that should be envied, but it's a record that is there because governments over the years have decided there are certain measures they should take to increase traffic safety.

I had the privilege of being the Minister of Transportation for a period of time, and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, so I saw, through those two ministries in particular, the need for safe roadways all over the province of Ontario.

Most recently, you'll remember, the government has increased distracted driving fines from a range of \$60 to \$500, and increased them to \$300 to \$1,000 upon conviction.

I remember when we first brought in this legislation. I was Minister of Transportation. I think we anticipated at that time, with the penalties we had provided, that someday we might well have to increase them if it didn't work. Indeed, initially, there wasn't the kind of response that government and safety officials wanted to see, so we saw those fines increase.

We have driver's licence suspensions for those found to be driving under the influence of drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol. We've always had legislation to deal with drivers impaired from alcohol. We recognize now that that is also something that should be extended to drugs, so it was.

We are requiring drivers to keep a one-metre distance from cyclists when passing. We see more cyclists than we used to; it's becoming more popular. You get too close to them and it becomes a danger, particularly for the person on the bicycle itself—or indeed, on a motorcycle—because they're much more vulnerable than those who would be inside a car.

We are requiring drivers to remain stopped at a pedestrian crossover or school crossing until those who are crossing the street are off the roadway. That is most recent as well, and it's essential because we found that the initial rules were not working as well as they should.

We extended the "slow down, move over" law to include tow trucks with flashing amber lights. You will know we had it for emergency vehicles. We've had some very sad cases in Ontario, that I am aware of personally, where police officers, for instance, on the highway have been badly injured or killed as a result of someone not moving over and taking the necessary precautions. It's similar for all emergency vehicles, and now for tow trucks, because they are doing work trying to get a vehicle going again or off the road.

Those are measures that we thought were exceedingly important.

We then listened to municipalities, who said, "There's another problem out there, and it's still in the school zones."

In my response to the member for Nickel Belt, I complimented her on taking this as a serious piece of legislation, which indeed it is. I know that in opposition—because I was in opposition for more years than in

government—you always try to make something out of a bill that it isn't. The official opposition has characterized it as a bill associated with money. I think the people in the municipalities would disagree with that. The school boards, the Ontario Safety League—all advocates for safety—would say this is all about safety in school zones. The measures that are described in this bill are going to have, I think, a significant effect on enhancing safety even further in school zones.

It's particularly true, you notice, at the first of the year, when the police are out in great numbers, when school starts, because they know the kids have been out of school all summer long. They're going back to school, and their minds are not always, number one, on safety and watching for vehicles. So the police appropriately station themselves near schools for about the first week, to ensure that we're not having some unfortunate accidents where children are killed—or indeed, a crossing guard, for instance.

I think there are a lot of good measures in this bill. I think it would likely, in normal circumstances, get the support of members of all parties. We'd be interested, of course, as the debate proceeds, in how best this can be implemented as a measure to enhance safety in Ontario.

I now yield my time to the member for Ancaster.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to follow the member from St. Catharines, who, as usual, has an incredible fount of wisdom to share with us on these and other matters, particularly given his long-standing historical connection to this place and on these issues and some of the difficulties associated with the issues in the past and how we can move forward together in ways that hopefully will, first and foremost, save the lives of many, especially our kids—not that our kids' lives are necessarily more valuable than anybody else's life.

1540

The primary driver of this bill is, in fact, to give municipalities the power to enact the kinds of special protections that, to be frank, Mr. Speaker, they're in the best position to determine—not people sitting here. There aren't a lot of people sitting here who can determine, for my beloved city of Hamilton, where these things should go—or Windsor. Right? It's the folk in Windsor and in Hamilton who have asked us to move forward with this legislation. The highest priority we can have is to try to save the lives of our residents.

I like the default speed limit of 50 kilometres. I think that's reasonable. Municipalities will be empowered to have some flexibility on that. We know definitively from research that has been done that speed is the essential ingredient to accidents. I travel the Muskoka-to-Toronto route the odd weekend, and I can tell you, I'm going 20 kilometres over the speed limit and there are people doing 30 to 40 more than me. My wife says, "Speed up," and she's a safety nut in that way.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: No, she's not a nut at all, but she—

Mr. John Fraser: Do you want to correct your record?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I correct my record: She's very consumed with safety and she says, "How come you're going so slow?" And I say, "I'm doing 20 kilometres over the limit."

I just want to point out that this legislation will not impact provincial highways. It will empower municipalities with the tools that they need.

And you know what? Municipalities don't have a lot of cash cows. The simple truth is, ever since the downloading of a whole bunch of services, it's been a real struggle. I don't mind my municipality making a few bucks by catching people who are breaking the law while putting students in danger. It's just common sense, Mr. Speaker, and I know that's something that there's an abundance of here in this place. So I anticipate that this will pass.

I also know that the people from my beloved city have got built-in crap detectors. If they discover or have solid reason to believe that municipalities are using this solely as a cash grab, they'll come down harder and quicker on the mayor and the councillors than we can even imagine, because they get it. They want to protect the kids there and they want to make sure that things that are in the best interest of the children and the community are taken care of.

We know, from direct experience with the automated speed enforcement proposal, that accidents, particularly fatalities, are down 44%. I don't think there's anybody in this esteemed chamber who would put 44% more kids and people at risk of serious injury or death simply to score some kind of political point. That's not why we're here. We're here to protect the citizens that we're privileged to represent.

So with no further ado, I will yield to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga—Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to share my thoughts on Bill 65, Safer School Zones Act. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is all about reducing fatalities, reducing serious injuries, and the paramount issue in this legislation is road safety. As we know, Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America, but we know that we can always make more improvement.

Speed is one of the biggest dangers on Ontario's roads. In 2013, approximately three out of every four speed-related collisions occurred on municipal roads. Municipalities have been asking us for some time to provide them with stronger tools so that they can keep their local roads safer. That is why our government has brought forward this legislation, which, if passed, would provide municipalities with access to new measures to improve safety on their roads. This is providing them with stronger tools to protect vulnerable road users, including children and seniors. Local governments are very supportive of it.

The mayor of Mississauga, Bonnie Crombie, said, "I welcome news that the Wynne government will empower

municipalities to install safety cameras near schools to reduce dangerous speeding and protect families."

This is all about providing municipalities the tools they need to protect our children. We all know that there is not one size that fits all, so it's very important to give municipalities the tools that they need, that they have asked for—and they have been asking for some time—to find solutions that work for their unique needs.

It's also very important to remember that municipalities are mature levels of government and are accountable to the citizens who elected them for the decisions they make. So we look forward to continuing to work with municipalities to find new ways to keep all of our local roads safer.

This automated speed enforcement technology ensures that it is used where it is needed the most, especially in high-risk areas and in areas where the municipality deems there is a clear need.

The official opposition is saying that it's a cash grab, that it's not about reducing fatalities, that it's not about reducing serious injuries. But a study was conducted in 2010, and this review of 35 studies found that in those areas where automated speed enforcement technology was implemented, fatalities and serious injuries were reduced by up to 44%. It is a telling sign that in leading jurisdictions in road safety, including the UK, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands, those jurisdictions have used this technology to supplement strong legislation and traditional enforcement strategies.

This is all about providing municipalities with more road safety tools so that they have the tools which they have specifically asked for. I support this legislation. I hope all parties support this legislation, as we did with Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm really pleased to weigh in for just a few minutes on this issue. I'll tell you, I'm a bit flabbergasted that there is any opposition to this bill whatsoever. This is about saving lives. We know—there's really good evidence: a 44% reduction. That almost cuts in half fatalities and serious injuries. Why wouldn't we want to do that? There is absolutely no good reason for anyone to vote against this. The only objection I've heard is that it's a cash grab. Well, if anyone is grabbing any cash, it's the municipalities, as my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Hamilton—whatever the riding is—says.

The municipalities will put this money to good use, but that's a real side point. The point is, this legislation saves lives. I can't imagine that anyone in this House would not want to be on the side of saving the lives of children, saving the lives of seniors and saving the lives of others.

1550

So I fully support this legislation. It's just absolutely the right thing to do. It's also what municipalities have asked for. They have asked for this legislation. I think, on

this side of the House at least, if there is a request and it is a legitimate request and it is a reasonable request, we treat municipalities with respect. This also indicates respect for those municipalities. If we saved one life, I think it would be worth doing; this is going to save a lot more than that.

I did note with interest that the member from Pembroke said this, just in February, a few weeks ago: "If this is something that the communities are supportive of—and I believe they are—it's something that I would personally be very much in favour of. We want to make sure that this doesn't become a political football that gets kicked around." Well, I think we all should be listening a little bit more to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because I think he got it right. This is one of those items. We all should be unanimous on this. We should just get it passed. We should just move on, Speaker.

I heard the member from Kitchener–Conestoga talk about Highbury Avenue in London being potentially impacted by this. Well, I tell you: I drive on Highbury Avenue a lot. Are there speeders on Highbury Avenue? Yes, there are. Are there schools on Highbury Avenue? Yes, Speaker, students use that street. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh suggested I might have been one of those speeders. It is possible, Speaker, that I maybe have occasionally speeded from time to time. But if I knew that there was a big fine attached to that, I might even slow down.

I think all of us care about the people of our community. We all care about the kids in our community and we all care about the children as they're going to school and coming home from school. Why would we not follow the lead of other jurisdictions that have made road safety a priority? We heard from the member from Mississauga–Brampton South about the countries that have done this already. France, Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands are all using photo radar. They're all using photo radar to help slow down traffic and help save lives.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm not afraid to say "photo radar." That's what people know it as, and I'm not afraid to say it. If photo radar saves lives, all of us should be anxious to put this debate to bed. We should just vote on it, we should all agree, and let each municipality make their own decision about whether this road safety enforcement should be used in their community.

I've just got a minute left. I do want to talk about some of the other elements of this bill, because it is photo radar but it is so much more than that too. It's about reduced default-speed limits so that municipalities can have a lower speed limit than the standard, as long as they post it when you're entering and when you're leaving the municipality. That makes perfect sense to me and should not be contentious one little bit. Red light cameras, also: It would allow municipalities to use photo technology, again, to lay charges against motorists who run red lights in those municipal intersections. These are all initiatives.

We're proud of our record in Ontario. We have very, very good road safety in this province, but it can be better. We can save lives. I think everyone should just stand up and say yes. Put the politics aside. Don't use the political football that Mr. Yakabuski warned us about. Just agree that it's the right thing to, and let's get this done.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so pleased to rise and say a few words on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. It's been interesting because we're hearing a lot of talk about how we need more road safety. This bill talks about photo radar and red light cameras. I think we are here to debate not just our own opinions but to bring forward the opinions of our constituents, the residents of the communities we all represent.

There are several concerns. One is, with red light cameras, who's driving the vehicle? People have concerns about that because they sometimes, at work, lend a car to a colleague, or to a neighbour at home, or a relative, and they want to feel that they're not going to get dinged a month or two later because of that.

In terms of photo radar, people want to feel that what we're doing is in the best interests of the entire community, that it's not a cash grab. Whether that money goes to municipalities or doesn't go to municipalities, they don't want to feel that they are driving perhaps a kilometre or two or 10 above the speed limit—that's very low—they've just experienced horrendous congestion trying to get home and now they're trying to make up exactly 30 seconds. We have to be cognizant here, Mr. Speaker, that people have lives. They have to pick up their children and get to programming. They are not just speeding because they have no regard for the safety of others.

Oftentimes people are speeding because of the horrendous congestion on our roads. We should be doing more to synchronize the traffic lights so that people aren't speeding up to try to make a light. They've got signs posted the way they do in many towns in Europe that tell people what speed they should go from one light when it turns green to make it to the next light, so it just turns green as soon as they get there. Then they won't be speeding up to try to make a green light.

I think we see a lot of support for making our roads safer. We see a lot of support from many people in the Legislature, but we want to get our communities to voice their opinion as well.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've been listening very closely this afternoon to the discussion brought on by the government members. I must say I agree with the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale when he said that he doesn't see this as a cash grab, that municipalities are going to start raking in the bucks. But if they do make a few dollars on it, the end result is we'll have safer roads, which is a good thing.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South talked about it being a tool, that the need is out there, one size doesn't fit all, and we well know that in this House. On the same hand, municipalities, as she said, are a senior, mature order of government. They've been asking for several things from this government because one size doesn't fit all, such as taxing powers, the same as the Toronto act affords municipalities. In this case, we're listening to municipalities in the taxing act—joint and several.

But it's interesting, most of the members talked about automated speed enforcement. So I guess they had a PR firm advise them not to use the other PR term, photo radar, until the Deputy Premier came right out and said, "This is what it is. Let's call it what it is." That's what it is, so why don't we call it as it is? Why do we slip back into government-speak of "automated speed enforcement."

The only thing that we have yet to get from the government is some kind of definition on what a community zone will be. I think that has to be nailed down. I'd like the next opportunity for government members to tell us how they're going to define "community zone."

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to rise again this afternoon as we debate Bill 65. I feel compelled to offer some facts on this bill, not just for the record, but for the benefit of people who are watching at home, and I'm going to backtrack. I'm glad I have the chance to get up and speak to this again. This is in response to some comments that were made about an hour ago.

My concern is that on the issue of automated speed enforcement, or photo radar—I'll call it that too—a comment was made that this is going to be installed on Ontario highways. I'm not certain where this misinformation originated, but you need to know that it is not true. It is not going in on Ontario highways. Automated speed enforcement, as stated in Bill 65, is going to a tool for municipalities in community safe zones. We do trust our municipal partners in order to respect them. They know who elected them. They know how to enforce this, and we're giving them a tool that they can use. I know that in my region of Waterloo, our municipal leaders and our chief of police have added their voices to the chorus of municipal leaders right across Ontario who say that they need and want this tool to slow down speeders.

1600

We've heard from a number of opposition members this afternoon touching on this concept of a cash crab. Let me speak to this. What you need to know, again, for the benefit of people who are watching at home, is that there is no financial benefit to the province of Ontario with this. If municipalities choose to have these cameras, they have to pay for them and they have to maintain them. They're going to be the ones issuing the tickets and they will get the proceeds, not the province. So if the opposition members decide that they're not going to be

supporting Bill 65, they're going against what their municipal leaders have told us they are looking for. We know this is going to keep our streets safe, and we're happy to respect our municipal partners to that end.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Certainly, we are all concerned about the safety of our children. That goes without question. But this bill leaves a lot of unanswered questions that we do have some issues with. It's very similar to what the government has been toting on TV with their hydro bills—or non-bills; they don't have it introduced yet. As far as guidelines, they've got everybody confused on this hydro bill, and now they're doing it on this bill, too.

We don't know who is going to be charged. Is it the driver? Is it the owner of the vehicle? It's very difficult—I'm going to use the term "photo radar"—to identify who is driving the car. If somebody lends out their car—if you lend out your car, Speaker—and it happens to get caught in these zones, the owner of the vehicle will have to pay the fine. So we have to understand that.

It's also interesting: I heard that these zones wouldn't be going on highways. Well, out in rural Ontario, there are schools located on provincial highways. So are we not putting safety zones out in the country? The government seems to think they're just going to go in towns. So I do find that strange.

I've seen police cars parked around schools where bus unloading occurs and where these zones are. A cruiser will stop people from speeding; it certainly slows them down. Also, if someone is caught there, the person identified as the speeder is charged, where this system here can charge the owner of the vehicle.

There are a lot of unanswered questions here that I hope the government will address in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions or comments. One of the government members who spoke can respond.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to rise again. I support Bill 65. As I said earlier and I would like to reiterate, it's all about road safety. Municipal partners have been asking about this. That is why we brought this legislation forward, so that they have the tools to keep their roads safe.

The official opposition has said that it's a cash grab, that it will not reduce collisions, that it will not reduce accidents. That's not true. It will definitely reduce collisions. It will definitely reduce serious injuries. As I said earlier, in 2010, a review of 35 studies found that where this automated speed enforcement, which is also known as photo radar, has been used, there has been evidence that those accidents have been reduced by 44%.

It's all about providing stronger tools for our municipal partners, because we want to keep our roads safe. There is great, great evidence that Ontarians are very proud of keeping our roads safe.

I support this bill and I urge all members of this House to support this very important piece of road safety

legislation so that it can go to committee, we can hear from stakeholders and we can move it on further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters. Mr. Speaker, we all support increasing safety around our schools and for our students. We all want our children and grandchildren to be safe going to and from school and playing in our communities. As the weather gets warmer, more children will be walking to school and playing outside. Safety, particularly for children, is a goal we can all agree upon.

Unfortunately, I'm not sure if everything this government has done is consistent with that goal. For example, I do wonder how forcing students to take longer bus rides to attend schools in another community, because the local school has been closed, increases student safety. I think we could do more for student safety if we figured out ways to have children attend schools in their own communities rather than closing local rural schools and having students travel an hour each way to get to and from their school.

I'm quite sure the parents of students in Honey Harbour's Our Lady of Mercy do not feel that their children will be safer attending a school in Victoria Harbour than they are in their own community. And if the public school in Honey Harbour, which is also in the midst of an accommodation review, closes, those students will have to travel an additional 60 kilometres, to Glen Orchard Public School, north of Bala. I can't imagine parents will believe that this will make their children safer. If this government was truly interested in student safety, they would have supported our motion for a moratorium on rural school closures until they could find a way to help communities keep local schools open.

If this government was truly interested in safety, both for students and for all Ontarians, they would not have allowed winter road maintenance in this province to deteriorate to the point where the Standing Committee on Public Accounts felt the need to request the Auditor General to do a special report on the issue. And let's be clear that it's not common practice that the public accounts committee requests a special report. The state of our winter road maintenance was so bad, and so many MPPs heard from their constituents, that the opposition asked for this special report, and the committee agreed to it.

As everyone in this House knows, the Auditor General determined that this government, by changing the way road maintenance contracts were awarded, saved money "at the expense of a reduction in the timeliness of ensuring Ontario highways are safe for motorists in the winter." Obviously, safety was not the government's first priority when it changed the way road maintenance contracts were awarded.

Not to focus only on the negative, I'm pleased that this government has done some things for student and public

safety, including cycling safety, which certainly impacts some students. Allowing students who cycle to school to ride safely on paved shoulders definitely improves safety for those students and all cyclists. Unfortunately, if those students attend a local school that is up for an accommodation review, like Gravenhurst High School, they may not be able to cycle to school if their own school closes and they have to travel to another town.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I've had several private member's bills on paved shoulders, and I'm pleased that it's at least legal now in the province of Ontario to ride on paved shoulders. I certainly encourage that more provincial highways have shoulders paved when they're being rebuilt.

But back to this bill: There are things in this bill I think we can all agree upon. I support the change to allow municipalities to use red light cameras without having to come to the province and ask for a regulation to allow them to do that. I don't have a problem with giving municipalities the right to set speed limits within their borders; however, I'm a little confused as to why this needs to be in the bill at all. Municipalities are already able to set speed limits on roads within their borders.

The explanatory note reads, "Section 128 of the Act is amended so that municipalities can designate areas by by-law where they can impose speed limits that are lower than 50 kilometres per hour." However, looking at section 128(2) of the Highway Traffic Act, it says, "The council of a municipality may, for motor vehicles driven on a highway or portion of a highway under its jurisdiction, by by-law prescribe a rate of speed different from the rate set out in subsection (1) that is not greater than 100 kilometres per hour and may prescribe different rates of speed for different times of day." It seems like it's already there, so why are we giving municipalities a right they already have? It makes me think that this has nothing to do with allowing them to set speed limits, but rather that the whole purpose of this bill is to give municipalities the ability to designate community safety zones where they can use photo radar.

1610

That brings us to the real issues of this bill. Unfortunately, the title of this bill, the Safer School Zones Act, does not give a clear indication of its contents. Even the longer title, "An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters," leaves out what this bill is really about: photo radar.

In introducing the bill, the minister used the more technical jargon—automated speed enforcement systems—twice in his short statement. Why not say it like it is and use the more widely understood term, photo radar? Even in her press conference before the bill was introduced, the Premier did her best to avoid using the words "photo radar." She described it as, "A speed-activated camera to take pictures of the license plates of unsafe drivers who are speeding." She went on to describe the fact that a ticket will be mailed to the owner of the vehicle.

The bill even strikes out the words “photo radar” in the Highway Traffic Act and replaces them with “an automated speed enforcement system.” Speaker, let’s be clear: What we are talking about today is photo radar. It seems like the government was hoping that no one would catch on, but that is what this bill is all about.

I know my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga has clearly laid out the history of photo radar in Ontario, so I won’t get into that except to say that it is a contentious issue that I did hear some grumbling about in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka when this was announced.

I do have some questions about this legislation that weren’t answered in the minister’s leadoff speech, and that I would like to get on the record now. I hope some of these things will be addressed in committee and that the government will consider amendments to further clarify this bill.

Currently, the speed limit in school zones is tied to the times of day when children are coming and going from school. Will municipalities be encouraged to use photo radar only during those times, or at other times when children are likely to be coming and going? If not, exactly how does using photo radar outside of a school or community centre at 4 o’clock in the morning help increase student safety?

Will the province measure the effectiveness of using photo radar in school and community safety zones? In posing this question, I want to give credit where credit is due. Sean Conway, long-time Liberal MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, repeatedly asked the Bob Rae government what criteria they would use to measure the effectiveness of that government’s experiment with photo radar: “Will the Minister of Transportation today announce to this House or indicate to this House what specifically are the safety criteria by means of which the photo-radar pilot project will be assessed at the end of its tenure?”

That was Mr. Conway in this House in December 1994, and that was just one of many questions he asked about measuring the effectiveness of photo radar. It seems only fair to ask that this government commit to an assessment of whether or not photo radar in these community safety zones actually does anything to promote safety, just as their predecessors asked of the Bob Rae government.

I do want to say that at least when the NDP introduced photo radar, they did it as a pilot project, with a requirement for an assessment of the safety benefits. I would like to see more of this government’s legislation introduced with a mandatory review to measure whether or not the legislation is achieving its stated purpose.

Finally, has the government defined what can be declared a community safety zone? I realize this term is already used in the Highway Traffic Act. However, given that this designation will allow a community to implement photo radar—something even the Liberals described as a cash grab the last time it was implemented in Ontario—I think we should have assurance that the current definition will continue. I ask this because I’m

concerned that otherwise a municipal council could try to declare the whole of their town a community safety zone, or they could implement photo radar anywhere in the town. Or, as one Hamilton-area councillor suggested, could a town designate a major thoroughfare as a community safety zone, just so that they could use photo radar on that roadway? I think all are very valid questions.

There must be a safety-related reason for declaring an area a community safety zone, to ensure that municipalities don’t simply create these zones so they can implement photo radar as a revenue-generating tool. I understand that municipalities are feeling pinched, but I don’t believe that the province should be promoting photo radar as a way for them to raise money. I do have to wonder if this is being proposed now in order to try to placate municipalities that are complaining that they don’t have enough revenue-generating tools. If so, it is giving municipalities a bit of a double-edged sword: “Here’s a way to generate revenue, but use it at your own risk.”

I wanted to just briefly talk about how other jurisdictions have dealt with safety in school zones, which is something, as I’ve stated, that I think we all want to see. That’s one of the places where we absolutely want to see safe driving practices.

I’ve gone to Florida the odd time, and in Florida, when you hit a school zone, everyone drives exactly at the speed limit. They don’t go two miles an hour over the speed limit, because it’s a well-known fact that the police are there on a regular basis, and if you do speed in a school zone, there is no mercy: You are charged.

So what I’m saying is, if you were simply wanting to go with safety, you just need to be much stricter with and actually have enforcement, and have police cars there in school zones to do their job.

In my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I have the Humphrey school. I was actually involved, meeting with MTO and with the school board and concerned parents. The provincial highway runs through the small community of Humphrey. In that community, the municipality lobbied to lower the speed limit, and they also got a flashing light up there, so that when it was flashing, drivers would be aware that there were students in the area and would slow down. That is something that is also, I think, an effective way of increasing safety in school zones.

But the biggest thing is enforcement, if you really wanted to make it safer. It absolutely works in Florida. No one speeds through a school zone in Florida, because they know they’ll have a big ticket if they do so. And they don’t have photo radar there.

Back in the early 1990s, the Liberals called photo radar a cash grab, and that’s exactly what it is. Premier McGuinty was asked to allow municipalities to use photo radar, and he said no.

In 2015, the Minister of Transportation—the same Minister of Transportation who has introduced this bill—told the Toronto Sun that “the province doesn’t have an

interest in returning to photo radar.” Maybe that’s why, in all their speaking comments, with the exception of the Deputy Premier, they’re using all these other long descriptions.

I’m not sure what has changed since then, except maybe that municipalities are desperate for revenue sources.

In the early 1990s, the Ontario government was desperate for revenue and, as a result, the Bob Rae government brought in photo radar. It’s not just me saying that. On November 17, 1993, the member for St. Catharines said the following about photo radar: “I looked at photo radar and said we wouldn’t have photo radar coming in in this province if it weren’t for the fact that the Treasurer needs money and wants money. That’s the main reason it came in.” That was the member from St. Catharines in 1993. He just spoke a few minutes ago, and he didn’t seem to be saying the same thing at all.

The similarity is that this government is in a similar situation as the NDP government was in 1995: a terrible financial situation. The current financial situation with this government—of course, we know they’ve doubled the debt of the province to over \$300 billion. The interest on that debt is now \$1 billion a month. We are in a similar sort of dire financial situation. That’s where, I guess, this looking for revenue sources makes sense.

1620

I think Mr. Bradley was right. I can’t help but think that this government is giving municipalities the ability to implement photo radar because they are desperate for funding now.

Beyond the fact that it is a cash grab, I have another concern about the possible return of photo radar. This is an issue which I’ve raised in the past as a private member’s bill co-sponsored by the member for Burlington: the legalization of bike racks on cars, which might obstruct the camera’s view of the licence plate. I reintroduced that bill today, and it’s now called An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to end flak for carrying racks. We want our citizens to be active and to cycle. We want tourists to come to our province to cycle on our beautiful trails. Cycling, both recreationally and competitively, brings a lot of people into Ontario and into my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and yet, in Ontario it is still illegal to have a bike rack that might obscure the view of your licence plate. It is a law that is rarely enforced, but once in a while it is, and it needs to be fixed. Mr. Speaker, if we have more photo radar across communities all over the province, this situation will get much worse and we’ll have people getting charged.

The reason I initially put this private member’s bill in was because of a constituent of mine who was driving on the 407. They were charged with having a bicycle rack on the back of their vehicle that was obscuring the licence plate. Despite the fact that this particular constituent actually had a transponder—so they weren’t trying to avoid the fee for going on the 407—they were still charged. That meant that that constituent had to come down to Toronto to note that they were going to contest

the charge, and they had to come back to Toronto once more to fight the charge. They got off because they took pictures of OPP vehicles that had similar bike racks on the back and showed them on their day in court, and managed to get off. But with much more photo radar around, and with municipalities relying on it as a revenue tool, I can see this becoming a much bigger problem—all the more reason to either not have more photo radar or to make sure that this exemption that my private member’s bill would put in place gets put in place.

The town of Huntsville hosts an Ironman triathlon which attracts competitors from across Ontario, Canada, North America and even some from other continents. In order to support events like this, we need to update our legislation to allow people to legally carry their bicycles on bike racks mounted on the backs of their vehicles.

I’m concerned that the reintroduction of photo radar will create an extra obstacle to updating our legislation to make Ontario more cyclist-friendly. I hope that all members of this House will support the private member’s bill I reintroduced. As I said, it’s called “no flak for carrying racks.”

In the minute that I have left, I thought I’d just talk about some other safety concerns with driving. I think the member from St. Catharines talked about how many people are regularly being hit in the city of Toronto now—pedestrians. That is certainly a huge issue. My own feeling is that we need to look at cities like London, England and the way they manage peoples’ vehicles and cycling, because I think they do a far better job in terms of efficiency of moving people and, I suspect, have a much better safety record than we do in the cities, particularly in the Toronto area. It seems like, every week, a pedestrian is being hit in the province of Ontario.

I also think that one of the big problems in recent years that has come up is texting, whether you’re walking and texting or driving and texting. I know that there are more and more efforts being made to make people realize that it’s like the new drinking and driving. You just shouldn’t be texting when you are driving a vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, I can see I am out of time, so I will wrap it up there. Thank you for the time to speak this afternoon.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka as he raised some concerns as they pertain to this particular piece of legislation, Bill 65. Sometimes when you have a piece of legislation come to the floor of the Legislature it amazes me how differently we see the laws that are outlined in that legislation. Obviously the resistance that is coming from the PC caucus on this stems from photo radar; they have a long-standing opposition to having any kind of automated speed control in communities.

Surprisingly, though, in this particular piece of legislation there is a strong case for having measures in place that ensure that children are safe in and around schools. Our reading of the legislation indicates that the auto-

mated speed enforcement, ASE—otherwise known as photo radar—can be authorized in a community safety zone designated by municipal bylaw or a school zone designated under the act. School zones must be within 150 metres of a school, but a community safety zone need only be in an area where public safety is of special concern.

The PC caucus, the Liberal caucus members and, obviously, New Democrats feel strongly that municipalities are well positioned to determine where those community safety zones are and that there may have to be the ability to adapt, as the member has indicated, when some of these rural and northern schools are in and around provincial highways.

There's room to make this a stronger piece of legislation, but at the end of the day having measures in place that keep children safe should trump all of the other issues.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Here we go again. I'm very pleased, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, to rise again this afternoon to chat about Bill 65, designed to keep our roads safe.

I've been listening to comments that are being made by various members who are speaking on this bill, and I want to respond to something that was said by the member for Perth–Wellington. He was unsure who would receive a ticket violation: Would it be the driver or is it the owner of a vehicle? The answer is that it's the owner of a vehicle.

It's very similar to the way that we currently handle red light cameras. Currently, if you run a red light—many municipalities across Ontario are using red light cameras; we have many of them in my own region of Waterloo region—a ticket is sent to the address of the vehicle owner, and that is tracked through the vehicle registration. I hope that that provides clarity for him.

I would say to you that I can speak personally about this. My husband received a very hefty ticket in the mail not long ago for a red light violation, and he wasn't even in town that day. We were able to determine it was one of our kids who was responsible, but my husband got stuck with the ticket.

There is one last comment I'd like to make about slowing down traffic with automated speed enforcement. I had a conversation with Mayor Margaret Lupton recently. She is the mayor of Zorra township. Here is an exact quote from her: "Daiene, we are frustrated beyond belief with speeders." We met at ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. They're looking for options, ways of slowing down speeders. She said they put in speed bumps in town but they weren't working. In fact, one man came up to her in a coffee shop and laughed at her and said, "I can still take those speed bumps at 110 kilometres per hour. They're not slowing me down." Clearly, speed bumps are not working.

Margaret and other municipal leaders across Ontario are looking for options and Bill 65 would answer that.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to provide comment on my colleague and friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka. One of the first things he talked about was school closures. Maybe there's an alternative here, that they could give some of these cash opportunities to some of our schools, so we wouldn't have to close our schools because of their mismanagement and waste.

1630

This is yet again an indication of the Liberals saying one thing—they're trying to purport that the world's all going to be good and safe because of this initiative of theirs, when, really, it's them implementing another cash grab to cover off all the mismanagement and scandal that they've had.

I recall, back a number of years ago, they brought in the Green Energy Act, actually saying that this will save our environment and save our world as well. We know what that's doing to our province and to our municipalities.

They're calling it the "automated speed enforcement system," my colleague made us aware of. Why don't they just call it what it is? It is photo radar; it's going to be photo radar; and it's a cash grab, regardless of whether they put a little ribbon around it.

He talked about the licence plate bubbling. That's an issue right now that we certainly have, and if there's incorrect information being recorded on this photo radar, that's going to create a backlog in our courts. Just a year ago, this government was coming out and saying there was a whole bunch of backlogs in the courts, and they wanted to take traffic fines out of the court system. Well, this could just go right back to it.

The member from Kitchener Centre, in her first comments, suggested they were listening to the municipalities, and this was why they're doing it; this is what the municipalities wanted. I wonder if she would comment at some other point today on whether they listened to the municipalities about the Green Energy Act, and whether they're still listening to the municipalities about the Green Energy Act.

If the Liberals did not waste \$1.2 billion on gas plants, \$8 billion on eHealth, \$133 billion on the Green Energy Act, \$25 billion on the recent hydro rebate that they're proposing and \$11 billion on interest to our debt that they've accumulated—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would ask that you ask the member to go back to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry. The member is responding to the speech by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, so he's offering comments.

The member has the floor. I'll give you some extra time. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much.

If they weren't wasting and mismanaging all of that money, there would be more police officers in each of our communities, to truly make it safer.

This is a cash grab. At the end of the day, it should be about safety, but I ask the people: Is that really what the underlying intent of this bill is?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Once again, we're in questions and comments. The members who are offering two minutes of questions and comments are offering those comments with respect to the speech that was just given by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening intently to my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He talked about closing rural schools. He talked about the problems of winter road maintenance and the safety issues that came out of that when we went to the lowest-bidder contracts. He also talked about bike racks on vehicles.

So my question to the government is, after hearing the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talk about bike racks—and I hope you don't think it's a frivolous question—if a school safety zone comes up, and if there's a 30-kilometre limit on a school safety zone, and if somebody on a bicycle is going faster than 30 kilometres an hour and they're picked up on the photo radar, are they subject to a ticket, the same as if they were driving a motor vehicle?

I don't believe that has been addressed yet. I would hope that someone on the other side would be able to respond in a knowledgeable way—I know I'm setting the bar high—

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Somebody with some knowledge of the situation may be able to let us know: If you're on a bicycle and you go through a school safety zone, and you're going more than 30 kilometres an hour and you get busted, do you have to pay a fine?

I do have to disagree, though, with my good friends in the Conservative caucus when they see this as a cash grab. I do not see this as a cash grab. I see this as an opportunity to make Ontario's roads and streets more safe, our children more safe, and our students, our educators and our parents in school safety zones or community safety zones more safe.

I believe—being a former municipal politician—that they are a mature order of government, and they won't be out trying to raise that kind of money for the sake of cash-grabbing, grabbing cash, as opposed to community safety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka can now reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Kitchener Centre, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments.

I did want, briefly, in my two minutes, to go back to the point I was trying to make right at the end of my

time, which was that I think we have a lot to learn about safety from London, England. I happen to have a daughter who has been living there the past five years, so I spend a little time visiting her. They have a lot more traffic and people and activity than we do in Toronto, but it seems to be managed much more efficiently and, I suspect, more safely as well.

One of the key differences is that whereas in Toronto the intersections are always plugged, generally with people walking across them and vehicles waiting to turn, in London, England, the pedestrian crossings tend to be not at the intersection, but slightly up from it. You normally cross one lane and onto an island, and then cross the rest of the way. For the pedestrians, they very clearly mark, especially for those of us who are not used to vehicles driving on the other side of the road—as you go to step on the street, it states very clearly “look right” or “look left.” So the difference is that their intersections have bicycles, buses and vehicles moving through them all the time. Ours tend to be completely clogged with vehicles getting frustrated trying to make their right-hand turn through pedestrians, which I think is a dangerous situation, and also one that is not very efficient in terms of moving people or vehicles.

I think we could learn a lot from London, which seems to do a so much better job than, certainly, what I've seen in the city of Toronto. I just wanted to make that point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an interesting debate this afternoon, as I said. It is always very interesting to see how the different parties view legislation through very, sometimes, coloured lenses, I think. I do think, though, that we have some shared goals. There has been a common acknowledgment on the Legislature floor today that safety in and around schools is an ongoing issue. We have enough research and we have enough evidence to confirm that.

For me, this issue actually goes quite a bit back in history. One of the first committees that I sat on at the city of Waterloo was a traffic-calming committee in the municipality of Waterloo, in Uptown. As communities grow, they deal with these certain pressures, these growth pressures, and some communities do a very good job of adapting to it and accommodating it. This was around 2002, and this is when speed bumps became speed humps. I remember this very clearly because all the language got changed, and these were thought to be less intrusive but equally effective as a traffic-calming measure.

One of the first city council meetings that I ever went to, again in 2002, was to ensure that a stop sign was maintained in and around a school. We've come a long way from that, which is good. Certainly, the police forces—a special shout-out to the Waterloo region police force for my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, and indeed, the entire region. They have done an amazing job of transferring knowledge not just to kids and students, but most importantly, to the adults and to the parents who are in these communities.

The region of Waterloo has an excellent program called Active and Safe Routes to School, which once again relies on evidence and research which demonstrates that when children walk to school, their academic outcomes are markedly better, because they have this really good experience of having fresh air and being active and getting to school. That has been a huge culture shift, it needs to be said.

I sat on the Waterloo Region District School Board for nine, almost 10 years, and there wasn't a meeting that would go by where community safety and the speed of cars around schools didn't come up. When the school board pushed back and tried to educate the parents of those communities, we were very surprised to find that there was, quite honestly, a culture of entitlement around those who were driving to school. One instance in particular was at the Mary Johnston Public School. We would have parents parking two or three deep, blocking traffic, to drop kids off. These students, literally, were under a kilometre away from the school. We had to do a lot of work to work with the community to build some safety measures—the walking school bus where kids walk together.

There was a time and a place where we didn't actually have to teach children how to walk together to school, and perhaps as communities change—and I'm not discounting that there have been some serious safety issues across the entire province, and some of those safety issues are very hard to predict, but when fear is the predominant emotion—and parents, of course, love their children deeply; they feel directly responsible for getting their child to that school and they feel that the best way to do that is to drive.

1640

It's a huge amount of work to get them to the place where they can walk with a volunteer. The Waterloo Region District School Board is working with the Canadian Cancer Society to train volunteers to walk with students to schools. That's where we are. To hear one of the other members talk about how congestion has become a factor in the speed of cars around schools is quite something. There seemed to be an undertone of making an excuse for those drivers. There is no excuse for cars to be going through school zones at upwards of 70 kilometres an hour.

I want to give special thanks to the Waterloo Region Record, which did a very good job of tracking the incidents in Waterloo region. I'm going to give this data because we have to have some context to this conversation about why safety is so important around schools. When the Waterloo Record mapped the number of traffic incidents from 2006 to 2014 that involved school-aged children, they showed that September was the peak month, not surprisingly—it's an adjustment—for crashes involving school-aged children. It takes everyone to come together to ensure that that transition time is monitored very carefully. When kids are returning to school after summer vacation, they are at a higher risk. In fact, over the nine-year period, there were 61 collisions in

the first three weeks of school. These are collisions between a car and a child, or sometimes an adult—a couple of them were adults—most of which happened between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. and between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., when children are either going to or leaving their schools.

The municipality, the city of Waterloo, in co-operation with the school board—because those two levels of government have to work collaboratively—began a pilot project in 2013 to try to make some of these school zones safer by unifying and reducing speed limits in school zones to 40 kilometres an hour. Since that pilot project, the city of Waterloo has completed its installations of 40-kilometre-an-hour zones at all elementary schools. The lower speeds are a positive step toward improving safety and encouraging drivers to be more aware of children and parents exiting vehicles and crossing the street, particularly during busy mornings and afternoons.

It has already been mentioned that the police are major partners in this, especially during the transition into the month of September. At the start of the school year, Waterloo Regional Police were at 29 elementary and high schools in the region. In February, however, Waterloo Regional Police charged a man for driving over 100 kilometres an hour at 9 a.m. on Friday outside of a high school in Kitchener.

Not only do we need police to continue to enforce school and community safety zones, but we need to change driver behaviour as well. I have to say, call it what you will, this automated speed enforcement system that's contained within the legislation, or photo radar, is a deterrent to having drivers use excessive speed around schools. It is, and the research confirms it.

Also, we have enough research from various coroners' inquests, and even as early as 2012, the Toronto Medical Officer of Health, David McKeown, presented a report on the public health impacts of active transportation. His report recommended lower speed limits as a way to improve safety for pedestrians, and proposed that the default speed limit in residential areas be lowered to 30 kilometres an hour, which the World Health Organization says is the speed at which a pedestrian's chances of surviving a collision with a car are at a maximum. That's what we're talking about here: reducing the speed so you can ensure survivability of the conflict between a car and a pedestrian.

When I was on the school board, though, there was this huge tension between those who have cars and those who don't, those who have buses and those who don't, those who feel safe enough to let their children walk to school and those who don't. It does take the entire community to ensure that children get to school safely.

With this piece of legislation, though, I have to say that when I first read it, I was like, "What am I going to talk about for 20 minutes on this?", because this is just common sense. I'm genuinely surprised that there is resistance to enabling municipalities, empowering municipalities, to follow through on one of their core responsibilities, which is ensuring that our communities are safe.

I just want to review what this does.

Bill 65 will amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow municipalities to set default speed limits through a designated area in the municipality, instead of being obliged to use the province's default 50-kilometre-an-hour speed limit.

It completely rewrites the Highway Traffic Act's photo radar legislation, enabling municipalities to use photo radar to enforce speed limits in school or community safety zones that are designated under the bylaw. Photo radar will only be allowed in these areas. That needs to be very clear, given this fearmongering that it's going to open the door to excessive photo radar everywhere, when it clearly states that it will be in community safety zones, which will be set by the municipality.

Now, if there is a loophole piece in this legislation, it is our job to find it, and it will be our job, as legislators, to be sure, when it's at committee, to close that loophole, unless we're going to open the wound and have a fulsome debate on photo radar in the province of Ontario, given the fact that the Liberals and the Conservatives, in the early 1990s, both vehemently opposed this. That's the only way that this should actually happen, right? You can't just slide it in there under the door.

But at the same time, you can't blame people for having trust issues. The language in legislation matters, and there have obviously been incidents where legislation with a great title was brought to the floor of this Legislature and sounded great. We all thought the new standards around government advertising were going to prevent the government from using partisan advertising, and that is not the case, as we now know. Essentially, the Auditor General has said that there are advertisements out there right now where she would challenge this government in their use of them.

Call it what you will—automated speed enforcement system, photo radar—obviously this will be a tool that municipalities can use in school zones or as designated by the municipality. The province is enabling that to happen. Municipalities have asked for it and, yes, municipalities need revenue.

The fact is that the revenues from Highway Traffic Act offences currently flow to the courts under the Provincial Offences Act. In contrast, though, revenues from the administrative penalty system remain with the municipalities. That is clear. And so municipalities would gain access to new revenues if they are allowed to use administrative penalties for photo radar speed enforcement. This may be the purpose of Bill 65's broad regulatory authority to establish this new enforcement regime.

With the province's default speed limit, it can be very cumbersome to lower overall speed limits in a municipality, since it requires costly new signage. Many municipalities have sought the authority to set lower default speed limits in designated areas or the entire municipality, so in this regard, the government is responding to a long-standing ask of municipalities, and perhaps it may open the door for some of the other municipal asks that have been on the table for a long time.

My colleague mentioned joint and several, which would be a great asset and comes up every year at AMO in the bear pit. It's getting a little painful to have it come up every single year because there really is nowhere to go on this issue. Certainly, legislation and change is needed on joint and several.

1650

While some critics will say—and some opposition members have said—that this is a cash grab, if the cash is going to the municipality, it is not a provincial cash grab. It's not. It pains me, in some respects, but it's clear. So this argument on this side of the House on this particular issue really doesn't make any common sense—any Common Sense Revolution, any common sense at all. I think that you will hear from municipalities on this because they are desperate for this government to listen to them, and on this issue they are. So I'll leave that up to you.

Some stakeholders like Toronto, Ottawa and York region and other municipalities have sought the authority to deploy photo radar, and they welcome the bill. York region has also specifically requested the authority to use administrative penalties rather than the POA, the Provincial Offences Act, to enforce photo radar. I guess it needs to be said that CAA, who we all value in this House, has actually surveyed their members: 70% of their members support the use of red light cameras, for instance. They have yet to comment specifically on some of the issues in this bill, but we will be looking to them.

Having been on the school board for so long dealing with these issues on a very personal level, like going out in front of the school and watching the chaos around schools, and then working with the municipality to create some measures, both physical measures, like the speed humps and stop signs—but municipalities have also been challenged to ensure that crossing guards are funded in certain jurisdictions. In Waterloo, parent councils and school councils were very active in trying to ensure that there was a physical person at a crossing zone. The thinking was that that human being, that crossing guard, would be there for a fixed amount of time while the community adjusted to certain points of access or of tension. But we have to remember that new kids come in every year. So my feeling, very strongly, is that having a crossing guard physically be there to help our youngest children cross very busy roads is still in their best interest. We have seen—and, myself, I've witnessed—cars blowing right through those crossing guards' crossing areas. It's hard to enforce that.

So this is the other side of the coin: Enforcement is needed to ensure that, whatever measures come from Bill 65, there is a corresponding amount of resources to ensure that these measures are enforced. With any new change, there will be resistance; there always is. Sometimes that will be very difficult to overcome. But, hopefully, giving municipalities discretion over changing speed limits in their community will lead to safer roads in the province of Ontario. We believe that this is the right direction to go in.

I've already mentioned that evidence shows that pedestrians are much more likely to survive traffic accidents if drivers maintain speeds of less than 40 kilometres an hour. I did mention Toronto health and safety. But the Chief Coroner for Ontario conducted a comprehensive review of pedestrian injuries from traffic incidents and found there was a direct correlation between vehicle speed and the severity of injuries suffered. You may be interested to know that 67% of the deaths in Ontario in 2012 occurred on roads with posted speeds above 50 kilometres an hour, while only 5% of deaths occurred on roads below 50 kilometres an hour. So that stat, in and of itself, gives us enough, I hope, motivation to ensure all-party support for any measure that reduces the speed in and around schools.

I've mentioned some of the issues that the whole community of Kitchener-Waterloo has tried to address around the Canadian Cancer Society's healthy and safe walk to school.

But there is a point that I do agree with from some of the comments from the PC members, and that is that we are losing schools: our smaller schools and our community schools in rural and northern parts. I mentioned in my statement today Rideau High School in Ottawa. Because there hasn't been a comprehensive review of the funding model, because there hasn't been a true resourcing to value community hubs—there's lots of talk about community hubs—but the fact that 227 schools have closed in the province of Ontario since 2011 will result in students having to travel farther distances, be it on a bus, be it through a neighbourhood or be it through a community. Those school closures will lead to more students being transferred to school by vehicles, and that is most unfortunate.

Once those schools are closed, we don't get them back. It's almost impossible to bring back a community school, even if you try a leasing strategy and try to buy some time.

By my comments, I hope that you will know that while we are looking for greater clarity on some of the pieces of legislation, we will be supporting Bill 65 and making it stronger at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It is very encouraging to learn that the NDP is going to be supporting Bill 65. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo made a number of very valid points this afternoon, and I just want to underscore some of the things that she said that we do agree with—that this is just common sense. Of course it is. This is about ensuring greater safety in our neighbourhoods and in our communities. She said that she was surprised that there was resistance. You know what? We are surprised too, because all of this makes common sense. We don't quite understand why it is that our Conservative colleagues are not in favour of this.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo also noted that the evidence supports the enforcement. There is evidence that does underscore this, and we would hope that all members of the opposition would see this.

One thing I would like to do is to bring voice to some municipal leaders who have commented on Bill 65. Here's what Mayor Jim Watson had to say from Ottawa. He said:

"This gives us a tool to deal with a serious problem... I've talked to other mayors who are very much in favour of this and they don't see it as a cash grab but as a way to control speeding." That's the mayor of Ottawa.

The chief of police for Ottawa, Charles Bordeleau, said, "This is about saving lives. This is about reducing injuries. This is about reducing collisions. This is about changing driver behaviour." A comment that he made—we are listening.

Also from Ottawa: Sergeant Mark Gatien. He said, "We can't be everywhere. But when we can set up these instruments at various locations from time to time, it will help a lot and get people to slow down."

Speaker, the final comment I want to make is to respond to something that was said by the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He called me a liar. The Speaker who was sitting there at the time didn't hear it, but we all heard it, and I'd like him to speak to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you very much.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Point of order—

Mr. Randy Hillier: I never said that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Point of order: the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. If you have a point of order, I would entertain it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: A point of order, Speaker: The member misrepresented and put forward a false statement to this House that impugned my integrity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): On your point of order, I was not here when those comments were allegedly made. I would ask the honourable member from Kitchener Centre, in the future—

Mr. Randy Hillier: To withdraw. Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): —to maintain parliamentary language.

1700

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Order, please. Order, please.

We're going to continue with business. Again, I would like to remind all honourable members to use parliamentary language when we're debating important issues in this House.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to make comment to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. She brought up that she was a school trustee, and she talked a little bit about school closures in there. It's interesting, because one of the members across the floor, from Kitchener Centre, was talking about listening to some mayors. I

want to ask her if she'll listen to Mayor Paul McQueen, from the part of my riding where the Markdale school is going to close, and Mayor Paul Eagleson, from Arran-Elderslie—if she'll actually listen to those mayors. There's going to be a little band of people going out to listen. Maybe they'll actually put a moratorium on school closures until they truly do listen to people.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, one of the things that we're going to find with this whole—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre, apparently on a point of order.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I believe we're talking about Bill 65 here. If we could stay on topic?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe we're in questions and comments, and members can respond to the comments of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. That's what we're at.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo did talk about school closures, and the member from Kitchener Centre just actually remarked in her comments in reply about mayors that she was listening to. I'm just referring to some mayors that I happened to listen to.

The interesting thing that may happen with this legislation is, if it goes through, there will be 600 less schools that are going to be open, so there will be actually a lot more safety zones in our province, because of 600 schools that aren't going to need safety zones.

We want to talk a little bit about municipalities. This member likes to talk about what the Conservatives did when they were in power. If this member hadn't voted for two Liberal budgets, they might not be in power and we might not be in the deficit situation, so there would be more police to actually do enforcement across our great province.

In my riding, in two areas, Kimberley and Shallow Lake—Marilyn Noble came to talk to me about safety and speeding and these types of things. We want to make sure that safety is paramount, but it cannot be just a photo radar cash grab by using a different terminology, such as "automated speed enforcement system."

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening intently to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

I first want to say to the member for Kitchener Centre that I think I heard her say, between the lines, that the party of common sense is not showing any common sense in the discussion here this afternoon. I'm sure that's what I heard.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo spoke about traffic calming and about speed bumps. I have to say, when I was on city council in Windsor, that I had an issue in my neighbourhood where, with the way the subdivision was being laid out at the time, traffic that would normally have gone this way—there was no road

yet, so 90% of the vehicles going up this one street, to get over there, were going up a side street that didn't really want those extra thousands of vehicles a day. They approached me about putting in a speed bump. I somehow convinced my colleagues on city council to put it in, which was fine, until the lady at whose front door the speed bump was going to be, in their driveway, said, "I like the idea, but not in my front driveway." So you can't please everybody all the time, Speaker, no matter what you do, be it photo radar, be it the speed in school zones.

I was amazed to hear the member from Kitchener-Waterloo say that the regional police there just busted somebody for going 100 kilometres in a 30 zone, in a school safety zone. That's amazing, in this day and age, that we still run into that.

I must say that I agree with everyone in this House who is opposed to closing schools, especially in rural Ontario and in the inner-core areas of our cities and towns, forcing the people to be bused outside.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes to comment on the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. Seldom do we find ourselves doing two-minute rebuttals or questions when we tend to agree in general. It's kind of refreshing. I'm not used to it.

But let me say this, on a personal note—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Spoken like a true Liberal.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me say this: Being a father of four kids who are grown and a grandfather of nine kids—eight out of the nine are still going to school every day and one is working.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Do you have a driver's licence, Lou?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I do.

Knowing how important kids' safety is—they're our future. Who would be against any measure that we try to undertake that creates some safety for these kids? I mean, I think we have that generally.

I do, though, object to some of the comments—as you ruled already, Speaker, and I think it's safe for me to go there, to talk about school closures, because it's come up a number of times and I'm not going to point a finger. It's a bit hard to take when, especially the official opposition—I think we agree with the third party. They talk about the state of schools during their term in power. I can tell you, one of my kids, subsequently my grandkids, went to a school with mould in it for a number of years. Those kids now have a brand new school to go to in my own municipality of Brighton, a school where—I mean, there were broken windows. There wasn't money to replace the glass back in those days.

So it's a bit hard to hear some of the criticism about some of the hard work we're doing when it comes to funding schools. They've never seen as much funding in the past.

Speaker, I'm delighted that it looks like we're going to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Kitchener Centre, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Windsor–Tecumseh and Northumberland–Quinte West for your comments on the 20 minutes that I did on Bill 65.

For me, this issue comes down to one story. There is the story of a young girl who was struck in 2015 by a car just outside of Herrle's vegetables, Lydia Herrle. Speed was involved, as was inattention. The driver bent down to pick up a dropped cigarette and he struck her, and she was in a coma for several months. She did survive. She is going to Waterloo-Oxford. She attends there with my daughter, Claire. But the ripple effect of that inattention and that speed, as she was being dropped off in what would be—this legislation would make that a community zone because that's a drop-off area. The ripple effect, the pain and the angst of that situation, resonates with me every day.

If we can pass a piece of legislation which will give municipalities an additional tool to ensure that children are safer around schools, that should be the motivation, period. We can get this bill to committee, we can look at the language, we can look for greater clarity in the language; that can happen. We will have greater stakeholder input, I think, at that level. That's our job, to make sure it gets to committee. But I think the intention in this place, on the floor of this Legislature, is to indicate that we all understand that speed is a factor around schools. The evidence and the research supports that, and we can make a piece of legislation, we can create a piece of legislation which will meet the needs of students and municipalities and communities. On this issue, it needs to be possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 65?

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the MPP for Beaches–East York and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. I do want to say, the member from St. Catharines reminded us, as a number of people have in debate, that Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America, and that's because of a series of legislative changes that we've made over the years and enforcement. I agree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that the bill is common sense, and I agree with many of her remarks. When I look across the floor here, I can't think of one member across the floor who is going to vote against this bill, but we're having a lively debate.

1710

I want to read something. In Ottawa today, they're enforcing school zone speeding—they did that right after the March break. These are tweets in real time from Sergeant Mark Gatien and Phil Kane:

“And another driver caught doing 89 in 40 school zone.” That's one kilometre per hour away from stunt driving.

“Driver caught at 69 in 40 school zone. Was also charged for speeding in a school zone two weeks ago.”

“Driver caught doing 70 in 40 school zone because ‘I'm running out of gas....my gas light came on yesterday.’”

A 29-year-old driving in my riding of Ottawa South was charged doing 120 kilometres per hour in a 50-kilometre zone, and another driver was caught doing 89 in a 40-kilometre-an-hour school zone.

I just wanted to read that because that's the perspective that we have to take. I know there's debate on whether we call it photo radar; or ASE, which is automated speed enforcement; or TEE, which is technology-enabled enforcement; or PEE, which is photo-enabled enforcement. Whatever we call it, it's about protecting children in school zones.

This is something that law enforcement has asked us for and that municipalities have asked us for. When you characterize it as a cash grab, you're wrong and you're diminishing the importance of that piece in the legislation. And that's the point.

I agree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: This is something that we have to look at in committee, to study the bill and make sure that we've got it exactly right. But let's not make it a football—that's what's happening right now—because it's not. They're two totally different things. And so, as I said earlier, I can't look across this floor and think of any member that's going to vote against this bill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll be voting against it.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay, I guess you will be then, and you'll have to answer for that, as we all do.

The other thing that we need to remember here is that I'm sure that you supported the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex on Bill 94, which is enabling cameras on school buses. I know that your caucus supported it. I'm not quite sure what the difference is there, because it addresses exactly the same thing. The bill comes out of a very tragic incident that happened in his riding.

Let's have a wholesome debate, but let's not turn this thing into a football, because I just think that that's wrong. I think it diminishes the intent and the need for this legislation, that I've heard here we all agree on.

One other thing I think it's important to remember is that this is also letting municipalities set default speed limits. It's allowing a more streamlined process for red light cameras. Municipalities asked us for it, and these are things that we've had in Ontario for almost 20 years, red light cameras. They save lives. They protect people.

One thing that's not in this bill that I have talked to the minister about is window tinting. When you teach your kids to go to school, you say, “When you're crossing the road, look at the driver and make sure that they see you.” Now, we have a challenge in Ontario that we don't clearly define exactly to what opacity you can have your window tinting. I think that it is a cause for concern for those parents of children walking to school, and for police officers, trying to see into a car at night. You can't see out.

We have to do what we can as legislators to ensure that we provide laws that we can enforce and that protect the people that we represent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure to stand this afternoon, on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to add a few comments to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. As we've heard across the floor this afternoon, these measures would allow our municipalities to be able to choose to implement automated speed enforcement technology on municipal roads. They would be able to create zones with reduced speed limits to decrease the severity of pedestrian and vehicle collisions in urban areas and participate more easily in Ontario's red light camera program without the need for lengthy regulatory approval.

Speaker, this is really about giving municipalities what they are asking for—tools that they can use to be able to protect our most vulnerable citizens: children and seniors. This act speaks directly to me. I'm a parent of six children. I often say that I've had kids in school for decades; my youngest is in grade 8. I've seen the issues over the years with, sadly, some of my children's friends having been struck by cars, cars that were either speeding or not paying attention in school zones. I've seen people pass by school buses without stopping when their red lights are on. These are issues we are all upset about.

I also bring a different perspective, Speaker. When I started my nursing career many decades ago, I was at the Hospital for Sick Children for 10 years. I worked in the emergency department and the intensive care unit. I also worked on the neurology floor. I have to tell you that story after sad story happened when cars and kids collided. Cars won; kids lost.

This is about safety, and this is about the safety of our children and ensuring that our police officers have the tools they need to be able to enforce safety in our school zones. If posted speed limits were enough, we would not be hearing situations like we've heard called out this afternoon, such as a 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone and hearing about cars being apprehended at speeds upwards of 70 kilometres an hour. Those are the things that we really need to emphasize to our municipalities—that they can have those tools to be able to combat that.

I also want to take a moment to really emphasize that this is not applying to provincial roads; it's only going to apply to school zones and community safety zones.

As a mother, as a parent and as a nurse, I can't emphasize enough how important it is for our children to be able to go to school safely and come home at the end of the night.

I wanted to read a quote from one of our safety partners, and that is Elliott Silverstein, who's government relations manager for the CAA. He says this:

“CAA is pleased that these additional measures will become part of the tool kit to help municipalities and law enforcement across the province. By introducing these options, there is continued focus on making Ontario's

municipal roads even safer, with particular emphasis on children and communities.”

It's interesting this afternoon that all four Waterloo region members here in the House today have spoken on this issue. We all have the same police chief, Bryan Larkin, and this is what he had to say about this proposal—

Mr. Grant Crack: Chief Larkin—he's great.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Oh, he's a great guy. He's out all the time, and worried about safety. He says this: “People recognize that our most valuable resource is our children.... I'm hoping people see the value [of photo radar]. It's good public policy.”

I need to commend my other Waterloo region members. I need to commend the MPP for Kitchener Centre and also the MPP from Kitchener–Waterloo for their support of this bill. I know that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, in her role as a school trustee—her emphasis was on school safety and children's safety. It surprises me that the fourth member of Waterloo region, Speaker, talks about, yes, it's good to have children safe, but he wants to make sure—and he's quoted in the Toronto Star a while ago as saying that he wants “to make sure it achieves its intended purpose and doesn't become a cash grab like the former photo radar.”

Speaker, there was a lineup at AMO and ROMA to have municipalities—the mayors—come forward and support this measure so that they have an opinion and an option to be able to enforce these measures in the future.

I just want to reiterate that there would be no provincial gain for the province for doing this, but it would go a long way in protecting our children on our roads.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too have great pleasure in standing in the House today to talk about the Safer School Zones Act, Bill 65. I know I'll be followed up by our very capable minister afterwards to rag the puck at the end. He's very good at ragging the puck, Speaker.

I'm really surprised at the extent to which members of the opposition have been focusing on this whole—they call it a transparency issue: that we're not calling it “photo radar” and have come up with this great term, “automated speed enforcement.” Let's be clear: It's a very good term that we've landed on. It is automated—you don't have to have a person at the end of the street taking up valuable personal time; it does exactly that—and it's speed enforcement.

I know there were a lot of monikers and terms being thrown around. The member from Ottawa South mentioned one that he'd heard of, the “photo-enabled enforcement program.” We could have called it that. I had heard they were talking more about the digitization of dangerous driving in the province of Ontario. That way, there may be other technologies. What you get in this automated speed enforcement is that they're not specifically going to be relying necessarily on kinds of photo

radar. There may be new technologies developed, advanced sonar or laser—who knows? But the point is, it opened up the bailiwick.

I kind of thought we would have fallen on some moniker more like “broadening oversight of vehicular velocity.” That would have gotten more clearly to the kinds of things we’re trying to do here, which is to monitor safety on the streets to protect our school zones.

The bill does talk about school and community safety zones. Some have noted that it will be left up to municipalities to determine what they are. That’s really important, because I think we might even find opportunity in serious construction sites, particularly as you see in the city of Toronto right now across the top of the city through Eglinton, where there’s significant construction going on. Maybe there are opportunities, because that becomes a significant community safety zone that I think we need to take a close look at. They’re in the business of protecting workers who are working in and around a construction site, particularly in transportation—and maybe that scenario, that a municipality could determine what would be a community of interest to be a safety zone, and they could bring in cameras to that effect or bring in automated speed enforcement.

In my community, particularly as a result of one of these very tragic situations, where a young girl was struck in Leaside by a speeding car and died crossing the street, we have a proliferation of signs that are popping up all over the neighbourhood to slow down—community safety zones. We’re relying, very clearly, on public education, so that drivers will see on a regular basis. So in addition to listening to municipal mayors all across the province, councillors and school boards, I think we’re also showing here, in this new direction, that we’re listening to the people of Ontario. It’s unnecessary that people should have to be putting these little signs across our front lawns in order to remind people. We need to have a better education campaign.

Now, Speaker, I’m sure you’re of a vintage that you probably don’t remember Elmer the elephant.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: But maybe he does.

Interjection: Elmer the Safety Elephant.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Was he a Liberal? The Elmer Buchanan—

Mr. Arthur Potts: No, it wasn’t the Elmer Buchanan elephant. It was just Elmer the Safety Elephant.

The Ontario Safety League, where my friend Brian Patterson has picked up the mantle—not that he’s an elephant; I’m not going there. But Elmer the Safety Elephant—I remember seeing commercials where Elmer would swoop down and pick the child up just before they were hit by a car. There was a time in which kids, they theorized, were running out in the street hoping Elmer would be there. It’s interesting, if you think about the communication and the education that we’re doing there, that we’re putting all the responsibility on young children to look both ways. It’s an important message to look both ways, but the responsibility in this initiative is shifting

now to the operator of the vehicle, and I think that’s really, really important.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh postulated somewhat about this hypothetical about bicycles. I don’t know why, again, he’d be picking on bicycles. You could also be going too fast on roller blades or on skateboards. There’s a whole host of other things. I get the sense—you know, are you looking to license and have big licences? I’m sure we’ll have to flesh out that one over time, and I’m looking forward to doing so. We’ll get to that answer shortly.

Finally, I just wanted to talk—

Hon. David Zimmer: Hey, hey, you’re over time.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I just want to now leave it to the minister of aboriginal affairs and reconciliation—and off he goes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Picking up on what the member for Beaches said about not wishing to rag the puck, I will proceed with celerity. That is spelled C-E-L-E-R-I-T-Y.

Anyway, Ontario’s roads are the safest in North America, but we know that there is room for improvement. Speed is one of the big dangers on Ontario roads. In 2013, three out of every four speed-related collisions occurred on municipal roads. We want to do something about that. We’ve heard the concerns from citizens on this issue. We have crafted this bill, the safer schools act. We’ve particularly heard concerns around speeding around the school zones.

Just some facts, because there has been a lot of colourful debate—Bill 65 has three elements. Here are what the three elements are.

First, the automated speed enforcement; that’s also known as photo radar. With respect to that, a municipality would be able to implement it: image capture and speed reading technologies. They would be activated by a speed reading exceeding a predetermined amount in a school zone. Those would be called community safety zones. They would be signed sections of the roadway where safety is a special concern. Traffic fines would be doubled in those zones in order to promote safety, and importantly, those zones would be designated by the municipalities by bylaw. So we’re giving the responsibility to the municipalities to know their own municipalities better than anyone else. All of the councillors in each of the 400-and-something municipalities in Ontario know where those types of signs should be.

The second element is reduced default speed limits. There would be some changes to signage requirements. The urban speed limit is now 50 kilometres an hour. Currently, municipalities may, through bylaws, implement posted speedings other than the default. What this legislation does is it will allow municipalities to establish reduced default speed limits in urban areas and within municipal boundaries. Again, the signs would be posted, but the important thing here is that the decision to do that would rest with the relevant municipal council. The

Ministry of Transportation would work with our road safety partners to designate the regulations and so on.

The third element is the red light camera program. It will be easier to enter into that program. The red light camera program allows municipalities to use photo technology to lay charges against motorists who run red lights at municipal intersections. There are terrible, horrific accidents of cars going through red lights—death, injury etc. I need not remind members of the tragic consequences of that.

While the red light camera program is a municipal initiative, the province will provide the legislative and regulatory framework for the program. We'll do that through the Highway Traffic Act. Right now, municipalities can enter the red light camera program only after they receive provincial approval. This would allow the municipalities to enrol in the red light camera program on an opt-in basis. There would be a streamlined approval process.

Again, the essential point here on those three elements of Bill 65 is that it will be the responsibility of the municipalities and those councillors in the municipalities who know their municipality intimately, who know where the dangers rest, who know what their constituents want, and know best how to implement this program. This way, with the best possible decisions about where to implement these driving regulations having rested with the municipal councillors—again, I say, in their own municipalities—we'll get the best results to make the safest municipalities in Ontario.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to speak to the safer schools act. We are very supportive of the part of the act that pertains to the school zones and having photo radar in the school zones. That part of the act is appropriate. It pertains to the safety of children, and of course we would support that.

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Part two, which pertains to community safety zones, we do have a problem with, because it's undefined and could be almost any road in every municipality. Fundamentally, we don't support the idea of having photo radar on the roads of Ontario, except for school zones. It's an infringement on people's freedoms. It's unnecessary. It's just a little bit too much of Big Brother looking over our shoulders and monitoring us at every step of life.

It is also a great temptation by municipalities to do that, because as we know, municipalities are strapped for money. Their budgets—most of them are more or less broke and desperate for money. This, whether we like to say it or not, would be a revenue source. The temptation by municipalities to put photo radar in community safety zones, which could be all the roads, is definitely there.

There's also the idea of expanding the potential use of photo radar at stoplights. Again, not all stoplights need that. I think we have plenty of that, and that's more of the nanny state and infringement on our property rights.

We cannot support this bill in its present form. We can support the part that applies to photo radar in school zones and that only.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. Today is my first opportunity to speak on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. After having listened to the debate, we are fully in favour of this bill going to committee and being made even better, if it's possible.

I would like to focus on one issue specific to my riding. I have one school, École catholique St-Michel. It's on Highway 11, on the Trans-Canada Highway. It's mentioned in the Highway Traffic Act because the highway speed limit starts at 90 kilometres an hour at the entrance of École catholique St-Michel. Now, that doesn't really make much sense. The principal of École catholique St-Michel has started a committee, along with the parent council, to try and get that changed, so it at least goes to 60. We realize it's the Trans-Canada Highway, but this is an entrance to a school, and this school—a big addition is being put on it as we speak. There's going to be a daycare attached to it. The only way to get to this school is that entrance on Highway 11. There have been several close calls at that entrance, and now that the school is being made even bigger, we don't want to any longer take that risk.

I'm specifically making a request to the Minister of Transportation that we look at this, that we look at if we can work together. We realize that we can't have these cameras on provincial highways, but at the very least, could we look at lowering the speed limit in front of École catholique St-Michel down to a reasonable 60? We realize it's a highway, but to have vehicles going at 90 kilometres an hour, where there are school buses turning in on a regular basis and where there will be people going to a daycare, is just not sustainable safety.

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

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait vraiment un plaisir aujourd'hui d'apporter ma voix à ce projet de loi—et ma voix francophone. J'aimerais vous parler en français pour les deux prochaines minutes.

Monsieur le Président, je représente la communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans, une communauté en croissance au niveau de jeunes enfants, de jeunes familles qui viennent s'y installer, mais aussi d'une population de jeunes retraités et de gens qui, on pourrait dire, vieillissent en santé.

J'ai eu le bonheur de travailler avec les aînés pratiquement pour une partie de ma vie professionnelle, et je réalise l'importance pour la municipalité d'avoir des outils qui vont permettre de protéger. J'avais des aînés qui croisaient la rue à l'intersection, et, je vais vous dire, monsieur le Président, l'importance de pouvoir réduire la vitesse est significative dans les zones communautaires.

Je suis aussi encouragée de voir que nous allons regarder aux zones scolaires, parce que, en représentant

la communauté d'Ottawa–Orléans, c'est certain que, pour moi—on bâtit des écoles à Orléans. On a une population qui vieillit, mais, en même temps, la jeunesse est là. Écoutez, je ne peux pas vous dire comment c'est important pour moi, mais aussi pour nous tous en Ontario, de pouvoir avoir les outils pour les municipalités pour que, vraiment, elles puissent réduire, mais aussi trouver des façons au niveau de la technologie pour améliorer la sécurité—la sécurité de nos enfants et de nos aînés. Je vous dirais même que j'ai aussi une belle population de cyclistes à Orléans. Donc, je suis encouragée de voir le gouvernement qui répond et qui écoute la population.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a pleasure to get up to speak on behalf of the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I've been listening to the debate this afternoon, and it's clear we're talking about a government that's desperate to change the talk around the province on how they've failed the people of Ontario.

Our concern with this bill is that it's a way of bringing back photo radar, which I think the people of Ontario said very clearly they were against. The member opposite talked about one of his members ragging the puck. There's a real resistance to using those words, "photo radar." But when you allow—some of the talk we've heard from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga was about council already talking about using this for more revenue. That's the wrong reason. We support school safety zones, but we're talking about municipal expressways being turned into cash cows. We have some concern about that. When you have a bill here where the party is even afraid to mention the technology being used, you've got to wonder about it.

I can tell you from my days in municipal government that under this government here, we've seen huge cutbacks in funding. So yes, you're forcing municipalities into considering new revenue tools, and it's unfortunate that we have to resort back to photo radar, which didn't go that well not that many years ago.

We should be looking at more efficient government and really looking at how we can address some of the key issues, like health care. We shouldn't be turning to more tax, whether it be cap-and-trade—every time we turn around, we hear about another tax from this government. I had a long conversation with a person from my riding in the last hour, talking about how when he goes to the hospital, there are no doctors, and the lack of health care. It all goes back to ample revenue and no solutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York can respond.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a great pleasure to respond, on behalf of the members on this side of the House who spoke, to the comments of our friends opposite.

We talked a lot about speed, and I want to focus on what I think is the fastest thing we see in this Legislature on an ongoing basis. That is probably the number of

words that come out of the mouth of the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I'm sure you would agree, Speaker, that he can put more words into a two-minute or a minute-and-a-half response than anyone in this House. I'm a little concerned for his safety. Should he start tripping over those words, he could cause himself some harm.

I would suggest that maybe, in the line of automated speed enforcement, we might consider something like a verbosity velocity meter, or maybe a cadence counter—some sort of way that we could measure the volume and the speed at which words are coming out of his mouth. At the same time, we want to make sure they're good words, so I'm thinking maybe some kind of a mendacity meter or monitor of some sort in order to ensure it.

But what I really want to do is focus on the remarks from our good friend the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. What was very clear in his comments to our speech is that the members of the official opposition have no trust that municipalities will exercise their powers responsibly. It was absolutely clear that they want to hold back any kind of power from municipalities to determine, for their own purposes, what are the right safety zones in their neighbourhoods. They will support the school zones, and I appreciate that, but they won't support municipalities making a determination of whether community safety zones around—the comments of the community safety and correctional services minister talked about seniors in our community. There may be other zones that you have to protect with photo radar, as well, and I'm hoping they will come around. And if there are tweaks we can do in the bill, as was suggested by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka around timing of when those safety zones are in effect, I think we should look at that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Suggesting that there should be a "mendacity meter" in this House, I think, goes beyond the acceptable rules. I'd ask the member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've been listening to today's debate, and I find it interesting that most of the Liberal members, or many Liberal members, have prefaced their comments with the statement that Ontario roads are safe. Indeed, we are one of the safest jurisdictions in all of North America. The only province that is similar to Ontario in its road safety is PEI. No matter how you measure that, Ontario roads rank up as the safest, whether you rate that as fatalities or injuries per 100,000 of population, or per billions of miles or kilometres driven or by numbers of licensed drivers. In every category, Ontario roads are safe.

When you compare that with places like Alberta that do use extensive photo radar, Alberta roads are far less safe than Ontario roads, and they rely heavily on photo radar. Just to give you a couple of statistics: per 100,000

of population, Ontario leads Canada with 3.5 fatalities per 100,000 of population. Alberta is near triple that at nine fatalities per 100,000, and that travels right through. We can see the same similarities whether we measure it by kilometres driven or numbers of licensed drivers.

So I find it interesting that the members on the opposite side speak about the safety of Ontario roads, and then the member from Ottawa South spoke about the evidence of the safety of Ontario roads and then immediately defaulted and relied on tweets as a way to justify disregarding the evidence that we have in front of us. We heard a recollection of tweets that were completely in contradiction to the evidence of the statistics. Of course, this bill, Bill 65, ought to be named “photo radar makes a comeback in Ontario under a new name.” That’s the proper terminology of Bill 65.

We’ve seen this often, Speaker. When the Liberals want to advance a bill that they know will not have public support or when they want to get out of trouble that their policies have got them into, they have an excellent cadre of wordsmiths who come out with phrases such as “automated speed enforcement devices” etc. It reminds me that they also get into these red herrings.

Last week, when the member from Mississauga–Streetsville was speaking about the failed hydro policies in this province with the Ontario greenhouse growers, he blamed the cost and the challenges of the greenhouse growers on the level of humidity in Ontario, not the high cost of electricity. That’s pretty much a recurring theme or strategy with this Liberal government: When caught with their pants down or caught in difficult trouble, they come up with some very creative red herring to talk about. Last week it was humidity; too much humidity in Ontario is driving our greenhouse growers out.

But focusing this back to the reality of this bill, not just what some Liberal members think it ought to be, but what it actually states: If this bill was restricted to placing photo radar in school zones, there would be support from all sides of the House on it. But that, of course, is not what this bill does. There is no constraint in this bill on where photo radar devices can be deployed. As I said in an earlier comment, Highway 7 through Carleton Place could have a photo radar on it, or Highway 7 in Perth, or Highway 41 in Napanee, or Cloyne or Northbrook. They could all have photo radar on them. And of course, Speaker, there are no schools on those roads that I just mentioned.

But they are all able to have—this big, glaring loophole in this legislation, if it is a loophole, is designed as a way to hide—not hide; maybe disguise or camouflage—what is actually going on here.

I would think, Speaker, if the government was truly interested in improving the safety around our schools, and I think that’s what we ought to be looking at—I’ll remind the members opposite about a recent experience of mine in Panama City Beach, Florida, this winter. We went down there for a visit, on a holiday, and I was intrigued to see that every morning when schools opened,

and every afternoon when schools closed, the Panama City Beach Police Department placed a police cruiser on the road in front of the school. It had the lights flashing. I’ll tell you, a more effective means to control traffic and to reduce speed, I have never seen. That was a very, very effective way. And if small, little Panama City Beach can afford to place a police cruiser out in front of each of their schools, I think we should be striving for that level of safety in this province. That’s what I think.

But we know a number of our municipalities are feeling burdened with policing costs under this government. We also know that a number of our municipalities are feeling a significant financial burden from the lack of transfers and grants to our municipal partners, and that they are having difficulty. One must conclude or look—is this a mechanism? Are the Liberals using the photo radar bill, Bill 65, as a mechanism to disguise their failure to properly fund our municipal partners? They are providing them a means to drive up their revenues with a false proposition that’s put forward in Bill 65. That is the real crux of this.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaking of false propositions.

Mr. Randy Hillier: No, it is a false proposition, Minister of Transportation. If this was about safe schools, it would be limited and constrained to school zones, but it is not limited to school zones.

I think, Speaker, it’s also important—I heard the member from St. Catharines earlier join the discussion. He mentioned about pedestrian fatalities and whatnot as well, an important thing for us to consider. Maybe I can send this over to the Minister of Transportation here today. It’s a Globe and Mail story entitled “Fatal Crossings.” They look in depth at the pedestrian fatalities here in the city of Toronto over the last number of years. I’ll just read this little part of it for the minister: “The Globe and Mail analyzed more than five years of Toronto Police Service data on pedestrian fatalities to determine where and how people die in the city. Trends quickly emerged: The victims are disproportionately over 65 and hit by a larger vehicle. They are usually walking across an arterial road ... typically at a spot without a traffic signal or crosswalk.”

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That’s where the great number of pedestrian fatalities occur. What are we seeing this government doing to improve there? Well, I can tell, we’ve seen very little. There’s no funding to our municipal partners to help improve on that end.

Everything with this government comes down to revenue, and that’s what Bill 65 is all about. This is a bill that is about a cash grab and not about safety. It is a bill with a cash grab, and it’s not about enforcement. It’s a cash grab, but it’s not about reducing collisions. It’s all about failures to properly fund municipalities and giving them some crumbs in revenues through photo radar, to help mitigate those failures of this government.

Speaker, again, if they were being factual and upfront and forthright with the people of Ontario, they would

limit Bill 65, the return of photo radar, to school zones. But as I've heard this afternoon, there is no interest in that—no interest. Nobody on the Liberal benches has mentioned once any desire to restrain or constrain where photo radar would be deployed.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Community safety zones—

Mr. Randy Hillier: No, there are no criteria. The Minister of Transportation says, “Community safety zones.” But, Speaker, let me remind the minister that community safety zones are not defined. There is no legal definition. The municipality can create anything into a community safety zone.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm sorry, but the municipality can—

Mr. Randy Hillier: The municipality can create anything into a community safety zone.

As I said, Highway 7 through Carleton Place, where there is no school; Highway 7 through Perth, where there is no school—those can all see photo radar deployed there. Highway 41 in Napanee: no school, but they can see photo radar deployed.

If the minister really wanted to get all-party support and wanted to get a good bill through the House, he would limit and constrain those aspects of the bill which cause people to look at this bill and say, “Is this really and truly what they're looking to do?” But of course, there is no desire for that, and we see that it is a cash grab—a cash grab for this government.

The DVP: As my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned, there's nothing in this bill to prevent the DVP and the Gardiner from having photo radar on them.

But let me go back and use the minister's own words.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Go for it. They're good words; they're great words.

Mr. Randy Hillier: In 2015, this minister, who is chirping today, the same Minister of Transportation who introduced this bill, told the Toronto Sun that “the province doesn't have an interest in returning to photo radar.”

I'm not sure what has changed there but, clearly, something has changed. In 2015, he told the Toronto Sun that there is no interest in photo radar, and then we have Bill 65, the return of photo radar.

I want to also mention that the member from St. Catharines was in the House today as well, speaking to this bill. He stated, back when they were the official opposition—I believe it was during the NDP days. On November 17, 1993, the member for St. Catharines said the following about photo radar: “I looked at photo radar and said we wouldn't have photo radar coming in this province if it weren't for the fact that the Treasurer needs money and wants money. That's the main reason it came in.”

Now, of course, you can draw the same parallels. There are demands on the treasury from our municipal partners. This government doesn't want to fund them. They've already wasted so much money, they can't fund

them, so they are giving them an additional revenue tool called “photo radar.”

Mr. Bradley was right, back in 1993. He has a different position today, of course.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

We've got five minutes to go, and I would ask members to refrain from heckling and to allow the member to make his points. He's got the floor.

I recognize the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington again.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker.

That was the member for St. Catharines being right back in 1993, and of course having a different position today as a member of the government when it comes to photo radar.

I truly would like to see this government take on protecting our children and our pedestrians in a way that is effective and reasonable, but let's not hide it. Let us look at having police cruisers at our schools, like out on Panama City Beach.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, my Lord.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the member from Timmins–James Bay thinks that's funny.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think it's pretty hilarious.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, having a police cruiser out on the arterial road in front of a school certainly was very effective.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We have communities smaller than that and larger than that in this province.

Photo radar does not improve safety on its own. On its own, it does not improve it, because people who are breaking the law by speeding often will not know about the ticket until some weeks afterwards. They will not know, and if they're driving for a business or a fleet of vehicles, they may never know. There would be no effect on them whatsoever. The business owner, the commercial fleet owner will pay the price, but the people who are breaking the law will not. That's the fundamental failure of this sort of enforcement: You don't actually catch the people breaking the law and putting our pedestrians in jeopardy or in danger. So let's think of other ways.

As I said with the statistics, in Alberta, where they have far greater use of photo radar, they have nearly three times as many collisions, three times as many fatalities as we do here in Ontario. Again, take a look: Saskatchewan has seven more than that.

So there is evidence where Ontario roads are very safe. Let's continue to make them safer, but let's not delude ourselves into thinking that Bill 65 is going to make our roads or our school zones safer. This is about funding our municipalities in this offhand way, giving them some crumbs. They lost some of the money on the toll roads, I guess, with the flip-flop by the Liberal government, so here's another way they can provide some funding in a roundabout, circuitous way that makes

them look like they have an interest in protection when they don't really.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for their participation in the debate this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) 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
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Sault Ste. Marie	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Peter Z. Milczyn
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Julia Munro
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonnell
Shafiq Qaadri, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch.

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
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Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, Soo Wong
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Lorne Coe, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch