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Lundi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 septembre 2017

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Today is Franco-Ontarian Day, so bear with me. Please join me in prayer.

La prière/Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Michael Mantha: Premièrement, monsieur le Président, je veux te féliciter sur ton Notre Père qui a été offert en français ce matin.

Je veux introduire Denis Shank of the NorthEastern Ontario Construction Association, Adam Pinder of the Sault Ste. Marie Construction Association and Harold Lindstrom of the Construction Association of Thunder Bay. Welcome, gentlemen.

Ms. Ann Hogarth: Today, I would like to welcome the representatives of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, Alison Smith, Scott Garrett, Anita Stacey and Paul Gunning, who join us today from my riding of Barrie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to welcome the Retired Teachers of Ontario. Someday I hope to be one.

Mr. Michael Harris: I too want to welcome the folks from the Grand Valley Construction Association, here with COCA today. We look forward to seeing you later on, guys.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I don't see them here yet, but I know that Jim Lyons and Matt Todd, who are with COCA from the Windsor area, will be here this afternoon. Welcome back to Queen's Park—along, of course, with Denis Shank from up around Sudbury way.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. I would like to welcome the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, the OALA, to Queen's Park today, including OALA president Doris Chee; OALA executive director Aina Budrevics; and members Bryce Miranda, Virginia Burt, Margaret MacKenzie and Tim Dobson. I hope I didn't miss anyone. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, I want to recognize page captain Benjamin Leray, from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and his family: mom and dad Hanca Chang and Franck Leray, grandma and grandpa Meran Chang and Byung-Jik Chang. Also welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to welcome as well the Retired Teachers of Ontario today. They're here at Queen's Park, and they're going to have

a reception for us later. So if anyone can join in, please come and see them.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming, from Dufferin–Caledon, Dan O'Reilly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Durham constituents Martin Benson, Suzanne Fitch and Margaret Taylor, who are here today with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. Welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome some members from the council of construction associations of Ontario today: Paula West, Gene Stodolak, Sue Ramsay, Jim DiNovo, Paul Christie, Steve Stecho, Josh Heller, Clark Thomas and Denis Shank. Welcome to Queen's Park and enjoy question period this morning.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome the family of page captain Andy Wei from my riding of Markham–Unionville, mother Lili Zhang and sister Anna Wei. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very happy to stand and welcome today the Retired Teachers of Ontario to Queen's Park. They're here to witness question period as part of their Vibrant Voices—Awesome Years Advocacy day. We value the long-time contributions that they've made to education in Ontario's publicly funded school system. Twenty-four members of the Retired Teachers of Ontario are here today, including executive director Jim Grieve, as well as CAO Simon Leibovitz.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Je suis aussi la ministre des Affaires francophones de l'Ontario.

Ce matin on était rassemblés ici sur les terrains de Queen's Park pour célébrer la traditionnelle levée du drapeau. J'aimerais remercier et reconnaître le beau travail de l'équipe de l'AFO: Carol Jolin et Peter Hominuk, qui sont ici, et plusieurs autres invités, Stewart Kiff et, je suis certaine, Bryan Michaud, et cetera, qui étaient ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer avec nous. Merci beaucoup de votre implication communautaire au sein de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I just want to ask everyone to join me in wishing my fabulous seatmate a happy birthday. He had a very special birthday this past Friday, so happy birthday to the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have no time for retribution.

I also want to recognize my good friend Stewart Kiff, who came on Friday night and helped me celebrate my 60th birthday. It's great to see you in the House, Stewart.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I ask members for their special attention to welcome a very special guest who is visiting from my riding of Ottawa Centre. Please welcome retired Captain Michael Lambert. Michael has served our country very well and extensively.

He has been deployed to the Golan Heights four times. He was also sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993 as part of the United Nations Protection Force and, most recently, in 2007 he was in Kabul, Afghanistan, as part of the NATO headquarters. We thank him for his service. This is his first visit to Queen's Park. Please welcome him with open hearts.

1040

ALEX GLADSTONE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I call upon the Leader of the Opposition for a point of order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, a point of order: The MPP for Thornhill had an unexpected tragedy in her family this weekend with the passing of her father, Alex Gladstone.

If I could ask the good grace of the House for a moment of silence for this sad moment when one of our colleagues has suffered such a loss.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence for the death of the member from Thornhill's father. Do we agree? Agreed.

Could I ask all members, and the gallery included, to please stand for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): God rest his soul. Thank you.

VISITEURS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à tous ceux qui sont venus célébrer la levée du drapeau : les représentants de l'AFO, de la FESFO, du RÉFO, tous les étudiants, Pierre Hominuk as well, et Carol Jolin. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final last call for introductions. Seeing none, it is therefore time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

FRENCH-LANGUAGE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M. Patrick Brown: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim. Pour 14 ans, ce gouvernement reste

silencieux. Pour 14 ans, ce gouvernement n'a pris aucune mesure.

Ensuite, tout à coup, lors des sondages, les annonces commencent à arriver.

Les libéraux annoncent enfin qu'ils appuient une université francophone en Ontario. Pourtant, nous ne voyons pas de projets de loi, ni aucune université.

Monsieur le Président, la promesse d'une université francophone, est-ce que c'est simplement pour être réélu?

L'hon. Deborah Matthews: Merci pour la question.

I am enormously excited about the forward movement on the issue of a French-language university in Ontario. For too long, our francophone students have not had the opportunity to learn in an environment that is by and for francophones. That is going to change, and I am delighted that we are making very strong progress on that change.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Supplémentaire?

M. Patrick Brown: Encore pour la première ministre par intérim : le Collège Boréal doit être assuré que le projet de l'université francophone de l'Ontario sera lancé. Ce ne peut pas être seulement une promesse électorale. Le projet de loi doit être déposé et adopté en automne pour permettre au Collège Boréal de s'organiser.

Le problème avec ce gouvernement est que chaque fois qu'il y a une nouvelle promesse avant une élection, c'est typique qu'ils brisent cette promesse. Mais le Collège Boréal a besoin de s'organiser. Est-ce que ça c'est le cas? Est-ce que le Collège Boréal peut s'organiser?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Je suis vraiment fière de la question parce que ça va me permettre de parler de toutes les promesses que ce parti a faites pour les francophones et qu'ils ont brisées depuis des années.

Donc, moi, je suis fière de l'engagement de notre gouvernement pour faire rayonner la francophonie ici en Ontario. On a des actions concrètes. On va déposer un projet de loi, pour la première fois, monsieur le Président : une université de langue française, par et pour les francophones.

Donc, lorsque le chef de l'opposition parle de promesses brisées, on peut se souvenir de Montfort et du traitement qu'ils ont fait à notre francophonie au sein de plusieurs années.

Monsieur le Président, je suis fière de faire partie du gouvernement Wynne, une première ministre qui s'est tant engagée pour les Franco-Ontariens, et d'un caucus avec qui, tous ensemble, on va faire rayonner la francophonie en Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary?

M. Patrick Brown: Encore à la première ministre par intérim : est-ce qu'il y aura une loi cet automne? Est-ce qu'il y aura des fonds cet automne, et pas après la prochaine élection? Nous avons besoin que le gouvernement agisse aujourd'hui.

Le rapport sur l'université francophone par M^{me} Dyane Adam a été publié il y a quelques semaines. C'était une bonne première étape, mais nous avons besoin d'un vrai engagement des libéraux, et des organisations francophones clés impliquées dans le projet ont encore des inquiétudes.

Monsieur le Président, les partenaires ont demandé d'avoir une représentation des élèves et des communautés sur le comité de mise en oeuvre. Est-ce que cela sera le cas?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Écoutez, j'étais enchantée—nous étions enchantés—du travail exceptionnel que la D^{re} Dyane Adam a fait avec son équipe au niveau du conseil de planification. Le rapport Adam vient rejoindre, vient nous donner les outils.

Ce qu'on s'est engagé à faire, nous, le gouvernement, c'est de déposer un projet de loi, de créer un fonds pour le comité aviseur de mise en place qui va aider à faire avancer le dossier et, en plus, un fonds de démarrage de 20 millions de dollars pour permettre à ce comité de faire la mise en place de l'université.

Peut-être que le chef de l'opposition devrait revoir ses notes sur comment on crée une université de langue française. Nous devons déposer un projet de loi, une entité légale, et c'est ce qu'on s'est engagé à faire cet automne pour les francophones et nos Franco-Ontariens.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, the government charged ahead with more contracts for power we do not need. The famous FIT 5 contracts were signed, the most unnecessary fifth sequel since *Police Academy 5: Assignment: Miami Beach*—an unnecessary movie just like these unnecessary contracts. They are the same contracts the Liberals pushed forward on the day after their “unfair” hydro plan: 390 contracts signed, sealed and delivered; 150 megawatts of power Ontario doesn't need.

Mr. Speaker, why does the government, why do the Liberals keep on signing contracts for power we do not need?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm always happy to answer those questions. If we're talking about movies, Mr. Speaker, it's like *Groundhog Day* on this side of the House. We get it over and over again from a party that has no idea about the electricity system. Maybe what the opposition leader needs to do is listen to his critic. On TVO, talking to Steve Paikin, they talked about signing new contracts: “So the tweet saying she signs the next round of bad energy contracts tomorrow is inaccurate, right?” ... ‘Yeah, okay. I'll say that's inaccurate.’” That's from the energy critic. He doesn't even understand the process.

When we're talking about FIT 5 contracts, Mr. Speaker—these were from November 2016. There's nothing new here. Just like *Groundhog Day*, they have nothing to do but light their hair on fire and run from issue to issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the minister: The Premier is famous for her so-called conversations. These conversations tend to cost Ontario millions and millions, and sometimes billions, of dollars. Her latest conversation seems to have promised the opposition party in Quebec a significant deal. According to the leader, the Premier committed to building hydro dams in Quebec for even more power Ontario doesn't need. The Premier, of course, denies that secret deal, but maybe the Liberals want to come clean because we keep on having new contracts for hydro we don't need. Now there's this report in the newspapers in Quebec about this new secret deal.

Are the Liberals in negotiations for more power from Quebec that we do not need? Will the government come clean?

1050

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The Premier and myself have been crystal clear, Mr. Speaker. There's no new contract with Quebec, but the opposition keeps bringing it up with no facts, and that's part of the whole problem when it comes to the opposition making things up.

Interjections.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is, our government has clearly stated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order. I might jump to a warning if he does something again when I sit down.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Our government has clearly stated our goals for Ontario's electricity system, which is clean, efficient and, above all, affordable energy. We will not consider any deals that do not meet these goals, whether it's imports from Quebec or generation here at home. So while he continues to read tweets from an opposition party in Quebec or tweets from Donald Trump, you know what, Mr. Speaker? There is no coal coming in here. We're going to make sure that our system is clean, green, reliable and affordable, just like our plan says and like that party—

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: Talk about *Groundhog Day*. This is a government that will say anything regardless of reality. They will say anything regardless of the facts.

The Premier of Quebec called the CAQ's announcement very worrisome. He said it was a major mistake. The Premier of Quebec may have had different reasons to be concerned but I too find the deal worrisome. I know the Minister of Energy is saying the newspapers in Quebec are wrong and that the letter his staff accidentally released is wrong. Everyone else is wrong but this is on the front page of the papers for a reason. It's worrisome that Ontario would be in negotiations to buy power we do not need. We already give away billions in power. I am sick

and tired of Ontario ratepayers having to give away power, paying for power—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I am tired of over \$1 billion of clean, green Ontario hydroelectric power being spilled and wasted.

My question is this: Rather than attacking others, will you simply say—the Premier said last week that she was working towards a deal with Quebec, working and talking about it. I want to know unequivocally, are there any negotiations—

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

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be crystal clear. The Premier has said there is no new deal. I have said it. Again, they continue to try to find ways to use some of their own information, but they continue to tell the people of Ontario the wrong information. They do the same thing when it comes to our energy sector, when it comes to what they call spilling water. This shows how little they know when it comes to the electricity system.

One advantage of our clean, reliable and flexible system that we have built is that we're able to procure energy on an as-needed basis. This means that we only use the electricity that is produced at the cheapest cost at that time.

It sounds to me like that party once again wants to start charging ratepayers more and more and more. We have brought forward a fair hydro plan that has reduced rates by 25% on average. And you know what they did? They voted against it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The curse you have is you're sitting right beside me.

New question?

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Recently, my office received results of a freedom of information request about how much the Liberal government is spending to advertise their \$40-billion hydro borrowing scheme. The number is eye-popping. The Premier has allocated \$5.5 million from the public purse to sell this boondoggle for bankers to the public. Documents reveal the reason for this campaign was to counter “negative media coverage of rising electricity bills.”

Does the Acting Premier care to explain why the government is spending 5.5 million public dollars just to fight negative media coverage for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm always pleased to rise and talk about the fair hydro plan and what this is doing to help the people of Ontario. A 25% reduction in all households right across the province: It's important that they know that information.

What's also important is that they know about the programs that are available. The Ontario Electricity Support Program: This is a program that has increased the refund that many families who qualify will get. We have prepared and have a budget to help 500,000 families through the OESP, and we're nowhere near that number yet. We want to ensure that every single person who qualifies for this can sign up for this program.

We cannot rely on the opposition parties to talk about these programs, so we need to ensure that the government has its responsibility to raise awareness about these programs and services that are actually helping Ontarians. We're making sure that we're helping First Nations individuals, low-income individuals and seniors—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal government is spending \$5.5 million to advertise their scheme to the public. The government ads about a plan that the FAO says will end up costing Ontario families more in the long run don't do anything to help people who are struggling now to pay their hydro bills. Yet the government's low-income electricity support program that the minister was just talking about received an ad campaign worth less than half of the \$5.5 million that they set aside to promote their borrowing scheme.

Can the Acting Premier tell us why the Liberals are more concerned about spending public money to save their own political skin than they are about informing low-income families about how to get relief from soaring hydro bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're very pleased with the OESP and the people that it's helping, but we know that it can help more people. That's what the fair hydro plan did. It brought forward solutions to help low-income individuals—unlike their plan, which didn't even mention First Nations and waited till the last page—I know they forgot to talk about their plan because it did nothing to help the people.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, there are more programs that are actually going to help low-income individuals, those who live in northern and rural communities. That's the RRRP. We've changed that from just being for Hydro One R2 customers to include both Hydro One R1 and R2, plus six other local utilities, making sure that their distribution charge is, on average, like everyone else's in the province. They're saving significant dollars.

We'll continue to talk about this plan that's helping every single household and 500,000 small businesses and farms in this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to say, if the Liberal government is so committed to helping people

who have to choose between keeping the lights on and feeding their families, why didn't they just use that \$5.5-million advertising budget to actually help the people of Ontario deal with the cost of electricity?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: If they're concerned about helping so many low-income individuals and helping every family across the province, why didn't they vote for the fair hydro plan? That's a 25% reduction that everybody saw in this province on July 1. Instead, they chose to vote against that.

They chose to vote against on-reserve First Nations having their delivery charges removed. They chose to vote against the OESP that's helping seniors, that's helping low-income individuals. They chose to vote against the RRRP helping rural and remote people who live in those parts of our province.

Of course, that's not unusual for that party, because they always seem to vote no on everything that actually helps people in this province.

That's why we're bringing forward programs like the fair hydro plan, like Bill 148, which will continue to invest in the people in this province and make a difference in all of their lives, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier.

This ad campaign has been funded—go figure—right through the 2018 election year. Because of the sneaky changes that this government made to the advertising act, the Liberals get to run their partisan political ads about this costly scheme during the election next spring, without any oversight from the Auditor General. Does the Acting Premier honestly think that using public money on partisan ads for their \$40-billion borrowing scheme is going to win them and their government enough good favour with Ontarians to keep them in office come next June?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's talk about the fair hydro plan: a 25% reduction for all families right across the province and 500,000 small businesses and farms.

And then we talked about the programs. The OESP program offers significant support—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd hide my eyes too. Member from Renfrew, come to order. And previously, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the OESP offers significant support to low-income households across the province. Nearly 300,000 Ontarians have already applied since last year, and we've been doing everything we can on this side of the House to get enrolment even higher. We've put the inserts directly in people's bills, created advertisements, as we

were talking about, and even more, we're working with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to talk about Ontario Works automatically qualifying.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's talk about using public dollars for partisan purposes. Let's talk about that.

The Auditor General herself said that the Liberal government's changes to the advertising laws give them a partisan advantage. We know from the FOI documents on my desk right now that the reason for this ad campaign in the first place was "negative media coverage" for the Premier and her Liberal Party. Has this Premier not yet learned her lesson about these sneaky kinds of tactics, and that Ontarians are fed up with this kind of behaviour by this Liberal government?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It would only be the party opposite that sees giving families an additional \$1,000 off their electricity bill as sneaky. It would only be the party opposite that sees making sure that every family sees a reduction in their bill as sneaky. You know what's sneaky? They actually voted against that, and they don't publicly say that.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we've made sure that we've brought forward a plan that is going to actually help every single household and that is going to continue to find ways to help businesses. We're going to continue to work to ensure that the message gets out so that more and more people who qualify for the OESP program can get on it—unlike the opposition party.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This advertising campaign is expensive. It was clearly thought up to help the Premier and her Liberal Party bounce back in the polls. It is touting the so-called benefits of a program that the FAO says will be bad for Ontario families, and the Premier is running these ads without any oversight from the Auditor General, because her party decided to change the rules to favour the sitting government.

This all amounts to the exact same thing: Why is this Liberal government once again prioritizing their political future over the needs of Ontario families?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to remind everybody that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that actually has a Government Advertising Act which gives the Auditor General oversight. The party opposite voted against the original legislation in 2004, and they voted against the update in 2015.

Let me tell you what is in that updated legislation, which they opposed. What is in that updated legislation is an explicit prohibition on government advertising when there is a scheduled general election, which we will have in June 2018. There is an explicit prohibition on government advertising 60 days before the writ drops. We will not be running fair hydro ads during that period.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I always like to remind members that you're speaking to the Chair.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last Thursday, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West made a reference to the north as a “no man’s land.” I do not represent a no man’s land. I represent the people of Sault Ste. Marie. As proud northerners, we take great offence to these comments. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Member?

Mr. Ross Romano: Mr. Speaker, the member acknowledged making these comments, and the video shows. We can clearly see him making these comments to the member from Parry Sound.

People in my community constantly tell me that this government does not care about the north. This confirms that belief. Will the Deputy Premier please acknowledge the truth and apologize for this attack on the north, or will she reaffirm what we already know: that the people of northern Ontario don't matter to the—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many people in this Legislature who work very hard for their constituents. I can tell you that the member from Northumberland–Quinte West has no parallel when it comes to listening to people in his riding and responding to people's concerns in his riding. He is an—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Say it outside. Say it outside. Let's go, so you can say that.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's called libel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a moment, please.

I'm somewhat disappointed in the tenor of the House right at this moment, so we're just going to take a deep breath. But I will ask the member from Northumberland–Quinte West to come to order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I ask the member from Kitchener–Conestoga to come to order, and the member from Beaches–East York.

You have a wrap-up.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Northumberland–Quinte West works tirelessly. He works in his riding. He listens to concerns of people. He comes to Queen's Park and he brings those concerns to—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He called the north a “no man’s land.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will accept the challenge. The member from Nepean–Carleton will come

to order. And because of what your messaging is to me, we're moving into warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We can all learn a lesson from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, Speaker. We could all be better members when we follow his lead. I'm proud to be associated with this member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Deputy Premier: We've all seen the video. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West yelled a northern slur to the member for Parry Sound. I was not in the chamber at the time. It's the member's shifting explanations he's sending to my constituents that are in no man's land.

The member's views confirm what this government thinks of us in the north. They took away our passenger train. The north is hit harder with their skyrocketing hydro rates—80% of our lumber mills shut down on their watch. We fell from the number one mining jurisdiction in North America to the 16th, and the Ring of Fire remains untouched for 10 years.

My constituents want an honest answer from this government. Either they apologize to the north, or they're telling all their MPPs that it's okay to answer the north with lies.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to stand up and talk and represent a party that actually does things for northern Ontario, unlike that party, that makes a box and says, “Let's cut out the waste. Let's fermer le Collège Boréal.”

That party has no idea about northern Ontario. Expansion of Highway 69—I'm at Canadore College making announcements. Where's the MPP? Not there, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd have been there if I was invited, Glenn.

Interjections.

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

I kind of told you about this four minutes ago, and I also dealt with this last week: Leave each other alone. Do your job in your own riding.

The member will withdraw.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's continue, Mr. Speaker. It's a—

Interjection.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, from NOHFC, hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent in all of

the ridings in northern Ontario. That is done by this government.

The expansion of Highway 69: I was just recently in Sault Ste. Marie, opening up and talking about NOHFC funding going into OutSpoken brewery, and actually helping their local hospital with more funding.

This is what this party does on this side of the House. All they can do is make up false claims about MPPs which are completely inaccurate—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is to the Acting Premier.

Peggy Clark of London came to Queen's Park earlier this month to support the NDP's call for a public inquiry into a broader investigation of long-term care.

Peggy's mother endured crisis after crisis. She was treated with the wrong medication for three months. She was moved three times in just six months, and her personal belongings went missing.

Peggy knows that front-line nurses and PSWs are doing the best they can, but there just aren't enough of them to provide the care that our parents and grandparents deserve.

Will the Acting Premier listen to women like Peggy and immediately expand the public inquiry, to find and fix the systemic problems in long-term care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I was very moved when I read about this woman's experience with a loved one in a long-term-care home.

With regard to the public inquiry which is under way, let me tell the Legislature what CARP is saying publicly about the scope of the inquiry: "We are pleased that the inquiry will look into both the circumstances and the systemic issues around the Wettlaufer case," said Wanda Morris, VP of advocacy, CARP....

"This opens the door to issues like funding and staffing which may indeed be the root cause of why Wettlaufer was able to continue to kill and assault care residents for so long."

Mr. Speaker, we intentionally wrote terms of reference that were sufficiently broad to enable the justice to travel down the pathway she sees fit, to answer these broader systemic issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: For far too long, the Conservative and Liberal governments have swept problems

in long-term care right under the rug, and it's time to change that.

Families and caregivers like Peggy Clark are calling for a broad public inquiry into long-term care. Leading advocates like the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly are demanding a broad public inquiry into the "huge problems" in long-term care.

Members of this Legislature have voted to support a broader public inquiry that gets to the bottom of the real problems in seniors' care. Will the government do the right thing and expand the public inquiry, or will it find another reason to sweep the problems right under the rug?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario—the headline of their press release read, "RNAO Welcomes Broad-based Public Inquiry into Nursing Home Deaths at the hands of Elizabeth Wettlaufer." Here's the quote, Mr. Speaker:

"A broad-based public inquiry should address concerns about the health and well-being of Ontarians living in nursing homes, says the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario....

"RNAO is pleased the province answered its call for an independent public inquiry to get to the bottom of the events surrounding Wettlaufer's horrific actions and, in particular, address the systemic factors to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring.

"We are pleased the government listened to our request set up a public inquiry with a broad mandate. We now urge Justice Gillese to exercise her full authority to make recommendations that will address the failings of our current system, including legislation and regulations, funding models and staffing"—

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour notre très bonne ministre des Affaires francophones. Aujourd'hui, le 25 septembre, tous les francophones partout en Ontario célèbrent fièrement la journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Nous avons d'ailleurs commencé aujourd'hui avec la levée du drapeau, ici même à Queen's Park, en présence de la communauté francophone et des jeunes des conseils scolaires de la région que je veux vraiment saluer.

En cette journée spéciale pour notre communauté, je me demandais si la ministre pourrait nous parler des engagements concrets du gouvernement envers la communauté franco-ontarienne.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Je veux vraiment remercier ma collègue la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier pour son engagement au sein de la communauté franco-ontarienne. J'aimerais commencer, moi aussi, en saluant tous les francophones à travers la province qui célèbrent le 25 septembre, et tous ceux qui sont ici à Queen's Park aujourd'hui. Je tiens aussi à remercier l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario pour leur travail et aussi pour cette belle levée du drapeau ce matin.

Monsieur le Président, il y a eu un moment important la semaine dernière, jeudi dernier. J'aimerais soulever que la première ministre a fait honneur à toute la province et aux Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens en étant la toute première dirigeante d'une province à s'adresser à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec. Elle a rappelé son engagement sans relâche envers les francophones ontariens, considérant la décision d'y aller de l'avant avec une université et l'entrée en fonction à l'OIF. On est fier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je remercie la ministre pour sa réponse. Je vois que c'est avec un grand plaisir qu'on voit les engagements concrets du gouvernement. J'aimerais aussi avoir davantage de détails sur l'université francophone. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait nous en dire plus au sujet de cette université?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Avec plaisir. J'aimerais souligner que, tout comme moi, la députée est une grande alliée des francophones, et je la remercie énormément.

Laissez-moi vous rappeler, monsieur le Président, que la communauté a longtemps attendu la création d'une université de langue française, gouvernée par et pour les francophones. Le gouvernement a pris la décision de présenter un projet de loi afin de créer une université de langue française, et nous pouvons en être fiers.

Cette université sera la première en son genre dans la province et offrira davantage de possibilités aux étudiants désirant étudier en français. Croyez-moi, cette université ouvrira un monde de possibilités pour les francophones et les francophiles du centre sud-ouest et aussi de toute la province. C'est une avancée historique et significative pour tous nos jeunes et les générations futures.

Je tiens à remercier ma collègue Deb Matthews pour son leadership dans ce dossier.

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ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, the crown began to lay out its case in the infamous gas plants trial. Before the government starts to tell us that this is a matter before the courts and they begin to dodge, dip, dive and play a game of—

Interjection: Duck.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, duck—and play a game of dodge ball, I want to share the words from the crown laying out their case. They said, “Despite [the Liberal chief of staff] being ‘painstakingly’ advised of his obligations to maintain records,” the defendants “acting,... together destroyed records that they had a legal duty to preserve.”

Despite those comments, I'm not going to ask about any specifics in the case but I do want the minister to apprise this assembly of why it is that the Liberal government has a policy to hide the truth.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I will attempt to answer a withdrawn question, and the answer doesn't change because the member acknowledged in her own question that it would be inappropriate to discuss any matters that are before the courts. I appreciate that the member has knowledge of the rules and she very much appreciates the fact that these matters are before the courts and it would be highly inappropriate for any members in this House to engage in any conversations that are subject to a court proceeding.

Speaker, that's the best answer I can give at this moment to a withdrawn question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Minister of Energy: I asked a very specific question on a government policy on record-keeping that the government doesn't want to answer.

It was Charles Durning, I think, who said it best, as he played a Texas governor: “Ooh, I like to dance the little sidestep. / Now they see me, now they don't.... / I'm on my way.”

Speaker, this Liberal government doesn't like that their shady dealings are aired out in public. I'm not surprised. Secret Quebec hydro deals, deleting documents, wiping computers, paying Liberal insiders, shutting down government committees—obfuscate, hide and block just seem to be the Liberal way—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw. If she continues down the road that she is on with regard to her language, I will pass the question. Withdraw, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, that line.

How can the people of Ontario trust this Liberal government to do anything? I certainly don't. I would leave it to the government to explain to us why those records weren't kept last year.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member can try any which way to use any kind of over-the-top, rhetorical language she wants to use. She, in her own question, admitted that she's asking a question that is related to a trial that is taking place, and she knows the rule better than anyone. She's been in this House long enough to know that when it comes to a matter that is before the courts, it is inappropriate for anybody to engage in conversation. That's the rule that applies to this instance, no matter how you frame the question or any other matter.

Therefore, Speaker, I advise everyone not to engage in a line of questioning that can have an impact on a case that is ongoing. We should respect due process. We should respect the independent judiciary and the work that is going on in that particular case.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question to the Deputy Premier. Over 3,000 CAMI auto workers have been on

strike in Ingersoll for two weeks. These workers are striking because they need GM to commit to keep building the Equinox right here in Ontario. Our industry is closely connected here in Ontario. The shutdown at CAMI has resulted in 255 layoffs at GM in St. Catharines and 180 layoffs at Spencer ARL in Niagara Falls. If the Equinox production is moved out of Ontario, not only will CAMI workers lose their jobs, so will thousands of other workers in Niagara.

We know that the Conservatives said to let the auto industry die. They don't support the auto workers. For the second time since the strike began, I will ask—the workers are fighting to keep their jobs here in Ontario—why isn't this government fighting along with them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly we are, and have been for the last 10 or 12 years, providing more support for the auto sector than any government in recent history—and I'll talk about that in a minute.

But our thoughts today continue to be with our auto workers and our auto sector in this province. I appreciate the question from the member opposite, because it's very important for me to say this: We will continue to urge both parties—General Motors and the workers—to reach a conclusion to these negotiations as soon as possible, because we know there are ripple effects now across our auto sector, including places like St. Catharines. We need to get these parties to a conclusion in this collective bargaining process as soon as possible and move forward in a positive way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: Not one auto plant has been built in Ontario in 15 years, and nine have been built in Mexico. Despite GM making record profits, these workers have been told they need to accept cuts to their benefits, cuts to their pensions, and a two-tier wage system.

Think about this: Despite having the highest-skilled workforce which has the highest quality record in the world, we keep seeing our jobs shift to Mexico. The workers are fighting back and trying to keep these jobs in Ontario—and not just for themselves, by the way; for all of us, for our kids, for our grandkids. They're trying to protect thousands of jobs all over Niagara, all over Ontario.

The Liberal government has to have an auto strategy. You realize that if those CAMI jobs get shipped away, so do thousands of other jobs in a number of sectors in Ontario. We know what these workers are doing to try to keep jobs in Ontario. Why won't this government produce a strategy that supports auto workers and Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I hate to be glib about this, but where has the member been over the last 12 years? He's been sitting across the aisle and watching a government that has been the most supportive government of the auto sector in recent memory.

The investments that we've made in partnership with that sector—and the member ought to acknowledge

this—saved the sector. We wouldn't be talking about the auto sector today were it not for the investments this government has made, and that's not just past investments. In fact, we've seen the auto sector commit \$2.6 billion since the fall of 2016. That's helping to support 40,000 direct auto jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West, the member from Niagara Falls, come to order. Thank you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Simply put, Mr. Speaker, since 2004, this government has invested \$1.4 billion, leveraging \$15.8 billion, and creating and retaining more than 72,800 jobs, and that's just the jobs created or retained—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you sit.
Member from Barrie.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I would like to congratulate the Premier and the minister on the historic signing of the linking agreement with Quebec and California last Friday.

As we all know, climate change is one of the biggest global challenges we face today. This government knows that Ontario needs a realistic and affordable approach to fighting climate change. That's why we have implemented a cap on pollution in order to create real emissions reductions in Ontario. To date we have had three auctions, each of which has sold out, the most recent of which generated just under \$526 million.

On Friday, September 22, Ontario signed an agreement to link our carbon market with Quebec and California, starting January 1, 2018. Speaker, can the minister please explain to the House why linking Ontario's carbon market with Quebec and California is the most affordable and effective emissions reduction plan for Ontarians?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the hard-working member from Barrie for that question.

Speaker, our government knows Ontarians are concerned about the devastating effects of climate change. That's why we've taken initiatives to put a cap on greenhouse gas pollution through our carbon market. Expert third-party economists and analysts have shown that our plan, which includes linking our carbon market with the state of California and Quebec, is best for Ontarians because it allows us to achieve real emission reductions at the lowest possible cost to both business and consumers.

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Speaker, we know that linking to these two economies, California and Quebec, is the best plan for Ontario. Third-party experts know it. Business knows it. The

only people who seem not to know it are the members opposite.

The third-party experts have also said that the PC's plan will cost four times more than ours, without providing any real emissions—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hogarth: On Friday, at the signing of the linking agreement, California Governor Jerry Brown stated: "Climate change, if left unchecked, will profoundly disrupt the economies of the world and cause untold human suffering."

We know that this global problem requires global solutions. That's why Ontario is expanding its market-based approach to join with other jurisdictions through the Western Climate Initiative.

While we are working with our partners across North America to expand the market, the proceeds for the auctions will continue to be invested into programs and projects that will help families in Ontario to protect the planet and save money. These projects include greener transit initiatives, improved cycling infrastructure, and the recently announced smart thermostats program.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please inform the House of the ways in which the proceeds from cap-and-trade are being reinvested into our economy in order to lead Ontario to a greener future?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member for that important question. Speaker, we know that tackling climate change is an important task. Not only that, we know that we cannot take this challenge lightly. We must achieve real results.

In Quebec City this past Friday, both our Premier and California Governor Brown said that, together, our three jurisdictions—California, Ontario and Quebec—are setting an example for other regions in the world to take action and lower emissions in a cost-friendly way. Together, we're leading North America in emission reduction efforts and decarbonizing our economies through effective and efficient means.

Our plan reinvests every dollar, allowing us to invest up to \$1.9 billion each year in green projects. Such an investment in clean technology and home retrofit projects allows the people of Ontario to participate in green initiatives that help to save the planet, and they do so at the lowest cost possible.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Lorne Coe: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. La Loi sur les services en français a maintenant plus de 30 ans. Le commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, a mentionné dans son rapport annuel de l'année dernière et aussi dans son rapport annuel de cette année la nécessité d'une refonte complète de la loi. Il recommande qu'elle soit mise à jour immédiatement pour refléter les normes d'aujourd'hui.

Pourquoi ce gouvernement ignore-t-il de mettre cette loi à jour?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Je veux remercier le député pour sa question.

Effectivement, la loi a 30 ans. La loi a 30 ans. Elle nous a permis de faire des avancées significatives dans notre belle province de l'Ontario, et cette loi a besoin d'être modernisée. C'est ça que j'ai dit—dans un engagement concret—lors d'une assemblée à l'Université d'Ottawa. Par la même occasion, je sais que le commissaire ne s'attend pas à ce qu'on ouvre la loi pour ne pas faire de choses significatives.

Je veux remercier l'AFO, qui travaille très fort avec la communauté pour vraiment trouver et savoir quelles sont les choses importantes dans cette refonte.

Pour moi, à titre de ministre des Affaires francophones, l'accès aux services en français est important à tous et, je le sais—cette importance—dans tous les secteurs. Donc, nous continuons de travailler.

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

M. Lorne Coe: Encore pour la ministre des Affaires francophones : à la page 95 du rapport annuel du commissaire de la langue française, le commissaire recommande à la ministre responsable des affaires francophones de « saisir cette occasion en donnant le coup d'envoi sans tarder ... à une consultation de la population » pour une « refonte de la Loi sur les services en français. »

Quand aura lieu cette refonte complète de la loi?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Encore une fois, je remercie le député pour sa question parce que l'accès aux services en français est ce qui est le plus important dans plusieurs secteurs. Lorsque je me promène dans la province, monsieur le Président, ce que j'entends c'est que les gens veulent avoir des services.

On parle aussi de désignations. Ma lettre de mandat fait référence au processus de désignation, qui va être amélioré, et c'est ce qu'on s'est engagé à faire cet automne pour emmener un plan de travail complet pour aider le cheminement des désignations.

Mais c'est certain que pour moi et pour nous, notre gouvernement, l'accès aux services en français—on a quand même, il ne faut pas oublier de le dire, 26 régions désignées qui couvrent plus de 80 % de nos francophones. Nous avons plus de 622 000 Franco-Ontariens qui célèbrent aujourd'hui le 25 septembre.

SANTÉ ET SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

WORKPLACE SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé.

Les négociations entre 27 000 travailleurs hospitaliers et l'Association des hôpitaux de l'Ontario ont déraillé sur la question de la violence au travail.

Pendant des années, les travailleurs de la santé de première ligne, dont la grande majorité sont des femmes, ont demandé au gouvernement de résoudre la question de la violence à leur égard. Mais ce gouvernement, comme

les conservateurs avant eux, continue de limiter les budgets hospitaliers, licencier les travailleuses de première ligne et pousser nos hôpitaux dans une crise de surpeuplement très dangereuse.

Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement va faire pour arrêter de faire augmenter le problème et commencer à protéger les travailleuses de la santé de première ligne?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We absolutely can't tolerate tragic incidents of violence in any of our hospital or health care facilities—for that matter, any government facility—across this province. Mr. Speaker, our aim and our goal is not only to have a culture and environment of zero tolerance, but to actually have as that ambitious goal zero violence against our health care workers, including those who are predominantly affected: our nurses, who are those hard-working individuals who provide that important care.

That's why—if I recall correctly, it was around two years ago—along with front-line workers themselves, the associations and the unions that represent them so aptly, and experts in the field of stamping out workplace violence, we created a table entitled Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table to do just that: to actually realize that goal that I stated earlier, and to work with those individuals and those front-line workers and those that represent them to make sure we actually have the impacts we're looking for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Si vous allez travailler dans un des hôpitaux de l'Ontario, vous devriez être en mesure de rentrer chez vous sain et sauf à la fin du quart de travail. Mais aujourd'hui en Ontario, les travailleuses de la santé vivent dans la peur.

Près de la moitié du personnel hospitalier de soins directs déclarent être agressés à chaque année. Il y a des travailleuses hospitalières en Ontario qui ont été battues tellement qu'elles ne travailleront plus jamais. C'est tragique, c'est inacceptable, mais c'est évitable. On peut prévenir cette violence.

Est-ce que le gouvernement va encourager le retour à la table de négociations de l'Association des hôpitaux de l'Ontario et leur fournir le financement nécessaire afin de garder ces travailleuses à l'abri de la violence au travail?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, we all understand that labour negotiations are under way.

Mr. Speaker, that Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table that I mentioned earlier not only brought together those key stakeholders that I mentioned, but it's produced its first report. That first report necessarily has focused on our front-line nurses because, as I mentioned, they are disproportionately affected compared to others in the workplace.

It's absolutely clear to this government that not only do we have an obligation to end workplace violence, but we do have the tools and we will make the investments to realize that.

Their first plan has emerged through a report. We're consulting and acting on those recommendations. We're working with the Ministry of Labour, the Public Services Health and Safety Association, and many other key

stakeholders, and our work is not finished. That table continues to broaden their work to others within the health care sector. But we are already making progress and beginning, emphatically and seriously, to implement the recommendations that were outlined in the first report from this table.

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DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, picking up on the excellent question from our member from Barrie.

Our government does have a very strong record of addressing climate change issues. For instance, earlier this summer, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change announced that Ontario is investing up to \$100 million from the proceeds of its carbon market into the municipal greenhouse gas challenge fund in 2017-18, a program that will help support community-led action on climate change by reducing carbon emissions.

We are already experiencing the effects of climate change in Ontario, with increased extreme weather events. This has been an extraordinary year for flooding in Ontario, as we all know. In May, Renfrew county and Pembroke experienced significant flooding. In Beaches—East York, we had significant flooding as a result of record-high lake levels. Heavy rain flooded homes on the Ottawa River. In June, homes in midwestern Ontario were flooded. In August, basements in Windsor and Essex county were overwhelmed by a sudden and intense rainstorm, and some of them were being flooded for the second time.

Speaker, my question to the minister is: Can he explain what our government is doing to assist people all across Ontario in addressing these extreme weather events?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member for the question.

We are indeed seeing an increased number of natural disasters, resulting in more assistance flowing to help people through our programs. Between 2005 and 2010, there were 17 declared disasters in the province requiring \$8 million in provincial assistance. Between 2010 and 2015, there were 43 declared disasters requiring over \$36 million in provincial assistance.

Given that there have been several flooding events in Ontario in 2017, we have activated the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program in 35 municipalities this year. The trend is obviously continuing. The new disaster recovery assistance program offers financial disaster assistance for people to repair their homes after a natural disaster, in cases where private insurance isn't widely available. In a flooding event, our provincial program kicks in if there is damage caused by overland flooding. It can help make your home safe and livable after a natural disaster. This program will help hundreds of families where our disaster recovery program has been activated this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I really want to thank the minister for that answer and for his ongoing work across Ontario helping municipalities—large, medium and small—address these important issues.

I know that many of our MPPs have seen flooding in their communities. Again, in Beaches–East York, we had overland flooding and many sewer backups.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: And Burlington.

Mr. Arthur Potts: And Burlington, of course—and effects on the local hospital.

Recently, the minister was in Windsor for the second time in a year to activate the disaster recovery assistance program for Ontarians.

We've heard concerns about coverage under this program following flooding in Windsor and Essex. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh said in the House on Thursday and other occasions that private insurance isn't readily available. But, Speaker, I've heard the minister say that our disaster recovery program provides assistance for damage covered by overland flooding and that insurance for sewage backup coverage is readily available privately—and technologies exist to protect against backups.

People who are repairing their homes want to know—Minister, will you please clarify about the insurance—

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: As I've said in the House before, Speaker, according to information provided to me, private insurance for sewer backup is readily available. On Thursday, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh said in the House that I was wrong. According to the member, the Insurance Bureau of Canada had also told me I was wrong. This is interesting, because I have a news release from the IBC which says that coverage for sewer backup is widely available. I believe the member for Windsor–Tecumseh also received the same information. There's \$124 million of insured damage in the Windsor region from late August flooding. But there is a difference between sewer backup and overland flooding. Private coverage for overland flooding isn't available in every case. This is exactly why our program exists and why it was activated in the member's riding. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh took his cue, I believe, from a media article and he drew the wrong conclusion.

Ministry staff will again be in Windsor this week to provide people with further information about our disaster—

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

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, as I hope you are aware, construction has started on the Bala Falls dam and power plant. This is still a controversial project.

One of the biggest concerns about this power plant is the safety of users of Bala Bay and the Moon River. I understand the proponent has submitted a draft safety

plan to your ministry, but that plan has not been made public. The proponent, Swift River Energy, held a public meeting last Thursday evening. There was a significant crowd at that meeting, some of whom were there to ask how the turbines could be operated safely in this location, but still Swift River did not release their safety plan.

Minister, can you please confirm whether your ministry has received the draft safety plan from Swift River Energy and, if so, can you commit to release that plan to the community for consultation?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, the Bala Falls construction on the dam is just beginning, but this has been a process that's gone back for many, many years. I know that there has been a lot of community involvement in it. I want to thank all of the staff from my ministry who have provided comment on it.

The Ontario government is committed to expanding clean and renewable sources of energy, such as water and wind power. As part of the environmental assessment for this program, Swift River Energy was required to consult with the public and continues to do so.

I can tell you that upon completion of all phases of this construction, the company will require a water power lease under the Public Lands Act. But public safety measures, including fencing, warning areas, all of the signs that are in that area, all of the safety features that would be required for that, are on the proponent. They will submit the plan, we will review it and it will be made public in due course.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have, just recently arrived, a very special guest in the Speaker's gallery. I am going to breach my own recommendation and introduce that person. I would like you to welcome the Honourable Allen Chastanet, the Prime Minister of St. Lucia. Welcome.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce a family who are here to support my good friend Jason Balgopal, who is part of my member's statement. We will soon have with us today his wife, Leigh; his mother, Jeannette; his dad, Kevin; and his brother, Ryan Balgopal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to speak about the strike at CAMI automotive plant. This plant employs

thousands of people in my community, people who are worried about the future of the plant and their jobs. I share their concerns, and I support their efforts to keep those jobs in Ingersoll. In fact, last week I asked the Premier to change her government policies, which have already driven 1,300 jobs out of Oxford.

The number one issue I heard on the picket line this weekend, and the number one concern when I talk to CAMI employees, is keeping those jobs in Ingersoll. I've heard from employee after employee who is suffering because of this strike. They are worried about their future.

We make quality cars in Ingersoll because we have a hard-working and skilled workforce. Those workers shouldn't have to worry about companies moving those jobs because of high hydro costs, taxes and red tape. While we as MPPs are not part of the contract negotiations, governments should be doing everything they can to keep those jobs in Ontario. I want to again ask the government to ensure that companies like CAMI can succeed so they can provide stable jobs for thousands of people. I want to once again encourage both sides to try and settle this as quickly as possible for the sake of those employees.

I want to say to the workers: I support your efforts. I understand how difficult this is for you, and I will continue to fight to keep those jobs in Oxford.

ARNOLD AMBER

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yesterday, more than 200 friends of Arnold Amber got together to celebrate his remarkable life. Arnold was a journalist. He started out as a correspondent for the Reuters news service in Africa and Europe, but he was best known for his work behind the scenes at the CBC. For many years he was the executive producer of CBC news specials. That covers most of the federal elections since the 1970s and many provincial ones, royal visits, and breaking news coverage at all hours of the day and night.

Arnold Amber was also a fierce advocate for social justice and human rights. For 25 years he was the president of the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression. He served as the president of the CBC branch of the Canadian Media Guild. Hundreds of CBC employees owe their full-time jobs and their pensions to Arnold Amber as he fought to do away with contract positions and turn them into full-time jobs.

I served on CMG's national executive with Arnold, and we spent 10 years together on the international executive of our union. He was our Canadian director and a warrior for fairness, be it at our small-town newspapers right across the country or at many other dailies, or at TVO, Canadian Press or the CBC.

Some say that, fittingly, he passed away on Labour Day.

To Phyllis, Jeannine, Gillian and David: Thank you for sharing Arnold's precious time with us, his union family. I take pride in saying that I loved the guy. He was

a friend and a mentor, and he certainly left his mark on Canadian journalism, human rights and the fight for fairness for us all.

JASON BALGOPAL

Mr. Arthur Potts: I rise today on behalf of my constituents to celebrate and acknowledge Jason Balgopal, who was recently named the 2017 Beaches Citizen of the Year by Beach Metro News.

Jason began volunteering well over a decade ago, when, somewhat paralyzed by feelings of helplessness, he channelled his challenges with mental well-being into volunteerism.

It started with a can of Goof Off, when he went out into the community and started taking graffiti and other things off of posts and recognized that he was actually now doing something positive in the neighbourhood. It empowered him. While out there doing that, he met Bob Murdoch. Bob's another great stalwart in our community, working at Centre 55 as chair of that board. He brought Jason on to the board at Centre 55, and Jason went on to become the chair of that board for almost nine years.

Jason has worked on a whole long list of other initiatives with exceptional organizations in the Beach, some that he started himself. Between 2009 and 2015, he served on the board of a local service agency, Neighbourhood Link Support Services. He founded the Beaches Mental Wellness group, a community-based wellness support group that has supported him as much as it has the dozens of other people that he has touched in his life. What Jason has repeatedly found in his volunteering and activism is that it's not about just helping others, because in helping others, you are helping yourself.

Jason was awarded the 2017 Beach Citizen of the Year award, surrounded by other recipients, on Sunday down at Woodbine park. I want to ask all of us to recognize all of the great volunteers in our own communities. Jason, as an example, I thank you so much for the service you do for our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Congratulations.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M. Victor Fedeli: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui à l'occasion de la journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Le 25 septembre est un moment pour la communauté de Nipissing de célébrer notre riche héritage francophone. Le 25 septembre a officiellement été nommé la journée franco-ontarienne en 2010.

Quelques années auparavant, le drapeau franco-ontarien a volé pour la première fois, à l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury, le 25 septembre 1975.

Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, thank you.

Je suis tellement heureux qu'un jeune étudiant en sciences politiques, Michel Dupuis, était un des cocréateurs du drapeau. M. Dupuis vient de North Bay,

au sein de ma circonscription. L'autre cocréateur était Gaétan Gervais, professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne. Les couleurs vert et blanc du drapeau franco-ontarien évoquent l'été et l'hiver. C'est une combinaison parfaite et un symbole parfait.

Célébrons cette belle journée francophone ensemble.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. If you look in the phone book in North Bay and Sudbury and look up Levac, you'll see there are a lot of names up there. I just wanted you to know.

CITY OF LONDON

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to share with this House a tale of two cities.

The first city is experiencing a boom in real estate, construction and digital creative, with 10 firms listed among the fastest-growing Canadian companies in 2017. Collectively, these firms—Arcane, Voices.com, Big Viking Games, Big Blue Bubble, Zomaron, Digital Echidna, Diagnostics Biochem, StarTech.com, HRdownloads and Canada Tubeform—grew their revenues more than 600% over the last five years.

The second city was also ranked among the top cities in Canada. It came third in the country and second in Ontario for the highest rate of opioid hospitalization last year, as well as for the highest proportion of children living on low income. While other Canadian cities saw a 10% growth in median income over the last decade, this city saw a drop of 2.1%. Its median income is now the second-lowest among Ontario urban centres. This city reported the lowest labour market participation rate of any major Canadian municipality, with about one quarter of working-age residents not working and too discouraged to look for work.

What are these two cities, Speaker? They are both London, Ontario. These statistics paint an alarming picture of an economy that is leaving too many people behind.

Clearly, we can do better. Londoners deserve a city that is both innovative and inclusive and a government that is committed to helping achieve that goal.

GARRISON KINGSTON FAMILY FUN FEST

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm thrilled to tell you about a spectacular two-day festival that was held in my riding of Kingston and the Islands on the 9th and 10th of September.

The annual Garrison Kingston Family Fun Fest celebrates our amazing military community and their families. Without question, their hard work, dedication and special commitment to protecting our nation and its security is of paramount importance and deserves both recognition and celebration.

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The central theme this year was Canada's 150th anniversary, and 25,000 people came out to enjoy the many

attractions in and around the sports centre, Fort Henry and CFB Kingston, our armed forces base.

From learning about Kingston's rich military history to watching the Snowbirds soar across Kingston's skies, there was something for everyone. They had a fully operational Griffon helicopter and a completely refurbished Sherman tank. We also had our very own Invictus Games relay, which gave participants of all ages a chance to engage in some healthy competition and win prizes. The Great Canadian Rock Show, which featured Trooper, one of Canada's most celebrated bands, among others, was sold out and had the crowd rising to its feet during an energetic and engaging performance. The list goes on.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, management and volunteer team at CFB Kingston, Via Rail, the city of Kingston, Kingston Police, Kingston Transit, Fort Henry as well as the vendors and sponsors who made this event a success. Kingston and the Islands treasures the military community and events like the annual Garrison Kingston Family Fun Fest give us the opportunity to recognize and celebrate everything they do to keep our nation safe.

WEARING OF PIN

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to ask unanimous consent of the House if I could proudly wear my Invictus pin, which is part of my—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is seeking unanimous consent to wear the Invictus pin. Do we agree? Agreed.

INVICTUS GAMES

Mr. Bill Walker: I am honoured to rise as the PC party's accessibility critic and recognize the opening of the 2017 Invictus Games, a unique competition to commemorate and honour the perseverance and determination of our wounded and injured soldiers and veterans who have overcome tremendous odds and continue to inspire us through this adaptive sporting event.

As we welcome 550 soldiers and veterans from 17 nations to take part in the games this weekend, we also open our hearts and minds to their many personal stories of courage that display only the very best of the human spirit.

I encourage all members to follow the games—and the personal stories from Team Canada—that showcases 90 members from the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian army, the Royal Canadian Air Force and veterans, as well as our fellow comrades from Afghanistan, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Australia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Romania, the Netherlands, Georgia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and Ukraine. They are all our allies and those with whom our troops have recently fought alongside during the war in Afghanistan and the rebuilding of Iraq.

In the words of Prince Harry—and I commend him for following in humanitarian causes like his late mother,

Princess Diana—“Time and time again, competitors from around the world tell me that sport has saved them; that the Invictus Games have given them a new lease on life; and that to represent their country again with fellow comrades is something they could only have dreamt of while lying in hospital.”

These competitors “have cheated death and come back stronger than before,” Prince Harry said, “and they are proving to the world anything is possible when you choose to be an unconquerable soul.” It’s a forward-moving perspective, and one I strongly support.

To echo lines from the poem “Invictus,” which is the inspiration behind the name of the games:

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed....

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

I ask all of us to wish these unconquerable souls only the best at the games.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Aujourd’hui, c’est la journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. C’est l’occasion pour tout l’Ontario de célébrer la contribution de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

J’aimerais, aujourd’hui, souligner la vitalité des institutions de la communauté dans ma circonscription d’Ottawa–Vanier. Nous avons tout d’abord l’Hôpital Montfort avec l’expansion de ses services et surtout ses investissements grandissants en recherche.

Nous avons également les organismes communautaires qui répondent de façon diversifiée aux besoins des nouveaux arrivants. Nous avons deux conseils scolaires, public et catholique, qui répondent de plus en plus aux besoins des nouveaux apprenants de façon diversifiée. Leurs programmes sont de plus en plus accentués à bien répondre à leurs besoins.

Nous avons évidemment La Cité collégiale, dont les programmes répondent toujours à des nouveaux besoins de la main-d’oeuvre. Finalement, je m’en voudrais de ne pas mentionner, évidemment, que nous allons avoir une nouvelle université francophone, mais nous avons également l’Université d’Ottawa, qui est un pilier de la recherche sur la francophonie.

Il y a beaucoup d’énergie dans la communauté franco-ontarienne en Ontario. Elle continuera longtemps de faire une contribution pertinente et innovante à la société ontarienne.

FALL FAIRS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand–Norfolk is blessed with an abundance and fairs and festivals unique to our diversified, rich farm heritage, ranging from the Dunnville Mudcat Festival, Port Rowan’s Bayfest, Charlottesville’s Donnybrook to Delhi’s Fall Fest. You’ll find something to do every weekend, leading up to Waterford capping it off with Pumpkinfest.

The week leading up to Thanksgiving presents two great fairs: Caledonia and the Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show. Norfolk Fair will attract up to 160,000 people. It ranks the fifth largest, competing with the likes of the CNE and the Royal Winter Fair.

Here at Queen’s Park and elsewhere I get asked: “Which country star or band is attending the stage? Are cabbage rolls on the menu? Where do I get a Dixie Dog? Who grew the biggest pumpkin this year?” Caledonia, Norfolk—all the fairs and festivals take us back to our younger days—again, the Dixie Dogs, candy floss, caramel corn, the lights, the music and the buzz of the crowd.

Following Caledonia, the Norfolk fair offers Young Canada Day, Warriors Day, country stars Tim Hicks and Chad Brownlee, monster trucks, demolition derbies, the livestock barns, of course, as well as all the beautiful show and heavy horses.

I invite everybody down to Norfolk–Haldimand. Come down and take in some of the best fairs in the province.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office;

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date ... yet the Liberal government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount;

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating;

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independ-

ent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

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

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Catherine Fife: My petition is entitled "Ontario Needs to Fund Family-Created Housing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's 2014 budget included a commitment to address the wait-list of more than 12,000 adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding, and some of whom have been waiting more than 20 years; and

"Whereas since the spring of 2014 the number of adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding has grown to more than 14,000; and

"Whereas there is currently no available funding to plan for a respectful transition from the family home to a home of choice in the community; and

"Whereas more than 1,450 Ontario parents over the age of 70 continue to provide primary care to their adult child; and

"Whereas currently adults with developmental disability must go on the crisis list before they receive residential funding, often resulting in a loss of choice, dignity and community; and

"Whereas family-created housing prioritizes dignity, choice and community inclusion for the resident living with disability as well as providing long-term cost savings for the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the growing wait-list for adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding and provide stable funding opportunities for family-created housing."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Olivia.

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GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

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

"Whereas Ontarians are concerned that individual, systemic and cultural racism continues to create unfair outcomes for racial minorities in Ontario;

"Whereas the time has come to remove the social and economic barriers that prevent our province from achieving true equality;

"Whereas in order to accomplish that objective and to tackle racism in all of its forms, our government has created the new Anti-Racism Directorate;

"We, the undersigned, acknowledge both our support for the concept behind the Anti-Racism Directorate, and recognize that there is still work to be done to build an inclusive Ontario where everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or cultural background, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

"Therefore, we petition the government to work with key partners, such as businesses, community organizations, educational institutions and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, in an effort to create a scope for the Anti-Racism Directorate.

"This petition encourages the directorate to consider initiatives that would increase public education and awareness of racism, and to consider various methods by which a wide anti-racism lens can be applied during the development, implementation and evaluation of government policies, programs and services."

I think this is a great petition. I'm going to put my name to it and hand it to Ariana.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families and businesses have seen their hydro costs more than triple under the Liberal government since 2003;

"Whereas the Liberal government's unaffordable Green Energy Act, the \$2 billion wasted on the smart meter program and the \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants will translate into a further 42% increase in hydro bills over five years;

"Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal government has collected approximately \$50 billion over the last decade through a global adjustment tax on hydro bills largely used to subsidize ... green energy contracts;

"Whereas the Liberal government has allowed peak hydro rates to increase by 15% on May 1;

"Whereas the Liberal government's elimination of the clean energy benefit will mean an average increase in hydro bills of \$137 per year...;

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

"To call on the Liberal government to protect Ontario families and businesses from further hydro increases by applying all proceeds from the sale of Hydro One to the \$27-billion electricity debt and imposing a moratorium on any new industrial wind and solar projects."

I affix my name to this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

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

“Whereas violence has been on the rise in publicly funded schools;

“Whereas mental health service needs have increased in publicly funded schools;

“Whereas identified students are no longer receiving the specialized support they require to succeed in publicly funded schools;

“Whereas Kevlar and classroom evacuations are considered solutions for unsafe situations in publicly funded schools;

“Whereas funding has dropped \$1.7 billion since 1997 (adjusted for enrolment changes and inflation) for publicly funded schools;

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

“Adjust the public education funding formula to

“(a) provide a safe learning environment for students, volunteers and staff; and

“(b) provide meaningful supports to address the needs of all Ontario students.”

Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this and sign my name and send it with page Michael.

DENTAL CARE

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

“Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer’s disease; and

“Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

“Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

“—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

“—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

“—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario.”

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

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to Highway 559. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas provincial Highway 559 is the main artery for the majority of the township of Carling and the only access to the extremely popular Killbear Provincial Park, which had more than 315,000 visitors in 2016; and

“Whereas the decision to downgrade Highway 559 from asphalt to a tar and chip treatment has greatly increased long-standing concerns regarding safety; and

“Whereas traffic includes many large vehicles such as RVs, trailers and heavy maintenance vehicles with which cyclists and pedestrians are currently forced to share the highway due to lack of safer options; and

“Whereas in its current state provincial Highway 559 has many dangerous sightlines and has been plagued by long-standing maintenance issues, including but not limited to improper application of surface treatments;

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

“The Legislative Assembly of Ontario request the Ministry of Transportation redesign provincial Highway 559 with safe sightlines and rebuild it with an asphalt surface and bike lanes.”

I completely support this and give it to page Rachel.

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that reads, “Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn’t have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

“Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don’t have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don’t take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

“Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

“Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians.”

I fully support this. I’m going to give it to page Javan to bring to the Clerk.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I have a petition here that was delivered to my constituency office in Kitchener Centre. It is entitled “Ban Fur Farming in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a poll conducted by Environics (2015) showed that 92% of Canadians are in favour of better animal protection laws. Another poll conducted by Humane Society International (2014) showed 68% of Canadians support a ban on fur farming;

“Whereas numerous countries and regions recognize that animals’ basic needs cannot be met in any fur farm housing system and have already banned fur farming, the import and/or sale of fur products. The United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Serbia, Denmark, Netherlands ... have all passed legislation banning fur farming...;

“Whereas animals on fur farms are subjected to long periods of inactivity, lack of stimulation and are restricted from performing natural behaviours (like swimming or interacting with an earthen floor), leading to frustration, stress and stereotypical (abnormal repetitive) behaviour such as pacing, cage biting, self-mutilation, physical deformities and high levels of infant mortality...;

“Whereas confining and killing animals such as fox, mink, chinchilla and rabbit solely for an unnecessary luxury item like fur is inhumane and cruel;

“We, the undersigned, believe fur farming is inherently cruel and we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider implementing a ban on fur farming.”

I shall put my name to this and give this to page Adam.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Canada announced intentions to alter the current tax laws for small business;

“Whereas as small business operators, Ontario doctors have utilized legitimate tax measures to plan for retirement, and invest in health care;

“Whereas the Ontario government is responsible for ensuring Ontarians have a world-class health care system and this proposal puts our system at risk;

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

“To urge the members of the Ontario Legislature to immediately call on the federal government to put a halt to these tax changes.”

I agree with this petition and I encourage all members of the Legislature to agree as well, and I give it to the page.

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LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to thank Emile Prudhomme from Val Thérèse in my riding for collecting these petitions, which read as follows:

“Whereas quality of care for the 78,000 residents of LTC homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing

acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act ... for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Here I am again. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime;

“When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture;

“Less than 10% of sexual violence cases are reported to police. For every 33 that are reported, only three result in a conviction;

“Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified...;

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

“Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment’s final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services...; and address systemic assumptions within the current” system “to ensure survivors are supported and not revictimized....”

Speaker, I agree with this, will put my name to it and hand it to page Duncan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have set aside for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING UNNECESSARY RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES INUTILES

Mr. Duguid moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / *Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, I look to the Minister of Economic Development to lead off the debate.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm delighted to do so. I'm delighted to rise today to speak at second reading of a bill entitled the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. That is something I had the honour of introducing in the Legislature on September 14.

My time will be shared with my very well-learned parliamentary assistant, the member for Davenport, who I know, as she did the last time we went through a bill, will be very much the expert on the finer details that are found within this very significant and complex bill. I want to thank her for the work that she has done on the previous bill and on this bill.

In many ways this is unheralded work. We know, and I think my critics probably realize as well, we're probably not going to make headlines today in this debate. The media gallery is not exactly full as we speak here today, but we don't expect that. The fact is, though, this is really good work for all parties, all members involved.

It requires a great deal of expertise and a great deal of skill to ensure that we bring these measures forward to ensure that the balance is there; that as we bring the measures forward, to reduce regulatory burdens for businesses—and we'll talk more about the details in a minute, but to ensure that we're not impacting the important areas of regulation that the public count on us to protect but, indeed, we're taking measures that reduce unnecessary regulatory burden.

I welcome my critics as well to the debate: the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I welcome them to the debate and I look forward to their comments today. It's still early days, and this bill will go to committee. Certainly, we welcome their ideas as these bills come forward, because there are times when you're making these changes when there may be unintended consequences that we weren't aware of to some of these moves, or when there may be better ways to do it. If they've got better ways to do it, I think we owe an obligation to listen to that. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, when I think about it, in many ways, that's what this Legislature is all about. That's why we're here. That's what our democracy is about. So I want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. We're known each other for many, many years and we've worked on a number of things together.

I like the member for Sarnia as well. He's waving at me. I guess he wanted me to throw him in there too.

I want to say something that I'm not authorized to say—I don't need to be authorized to say everything I say. I'm more of a passionate sports fan than I am a

political junkie, and I always have been. That's really been my true passion in life, and continues to be. But over the weekend, I was really inspired, tuning into some of the NFL football games, by what I think was courage shown, and fortitude shown, by NFL players right around the league, and team officials and owners, as they came together in a collegial way, as they joined together in harmony, speaking out for freedom of expression, speaking out for democracy, frankly. I think that's something that's commendable. I am happy to commend it. Our Toronto Argos, I believe, joined in as well in their game. As I watched that demonstration—and whether you're for or against their way of demonstrating, I think we all, here in this Legislature, are certainly for freedom of expression.

So I look forward to hearing from my colleagues opposite on where they might support our initiatives and where they think we can do better. That's part of what democracy is about. That is part of what freedom of expression is about.

We have lost loved ones. We have lost people who have put themselves in harm's way to fight for our democracy. When I saw those NFL players stand in unison this weekend, I've got to tell you, I was very proud of them. I think they deserve to be commended for that show of courage and unity. Certainly, I for one stand with them—or kneel with them, on this occasion.

I'll now start speaking about what I'm here to speak about, and that's the bill—in this cradle of democracy that we're so privileged to live in today.

I had the privilege of beginning to work on regulatory burden reduction many, many years ago. I guess it goes back close to 10 years ago now, my first post in cabinet—and the Minister of Labour is here. He's doing a fine job in a post that I think is often not recognized for the hard work that actually comes with that post. But I think of late, people have seen the work that the Minister of Labour is doing and recognize that it can be a very challenging post. That was my first post in cabinet.

One day, we were having a cabinet discussion. Dalton McGuinty was our Premier at the time, and we were talking about burden reduction and the need to do more to reduce the costs of business in this province and reduce red tape. I spoke out at that cabinet meeting, and I say this by way of a bit of advice to my colleagues opposite: I hope they don't, but if they ever do get the privilege of forming government—my critics, who are younger than I am—if they get the privilege of sitting in cabinet, you've got to make sure, before you speak out passionately about things, that you're ready to take on responsibilities. Because after I spoke out passionately about reducing red tape, the Premier of the day, Dalton McGuinty, turned to me and said, "I really like what you had to say. You're going to head up our new approach to regulatory burden reduction." I turned to him and said, "Well, I'm the Minister of Labour."

1340

No offence to the current Minister of Labour, but labour is not exactly high up on the list when it comes to

ministries that businesses tend to love. In fact, labour is responsible for a lot of inspections in our workplaces, and from time to time businesses do have the odd complaint about our WSIB system and things like that. Our current Minister of Labour has done such a great job that I'm sure that those complaints are few and far between these days—but perhaps not, I say to the minister with respect; perhaps it's still an area of concern.

I began about a decade ago on this work, and I soon became passionate about this work. I recognized that when my time here passes, it may well be that nobody ever knows all the hours that I spent on this file, but that doesn't matter. The fact is, I really couldn't find a better way for our government to make our economy more competitive, to give businesses the tools that they need to succeed, to find ways to attract investment. There are lots of things we're doing that do that, but this is a way we can do it without having to go to Treasury Board and get money and invest it.

I wouldn't say it's an easy way to do it. My experience has been that when I ask business leaders—and I've spent a lot of time talking to business leaders about reducing regulatory burden; hours upon hours for many, many years—I'll often get the response—and my critics will probably realize this as well: “Yes, you've got to reduce regulatory burden. You're killing us with all that red tape.” I understand that. But then I'll say, “Well, what is it, specifically, you would like us to address? Let's get down to work and figure out a way to address it. Let's make sure it's not one of those items that's protecting people's health or protecting their welfare in the workplace or protecting the environment. Most regulations are really, really crucial, but some aren't, or some can be done in ways that can reduce regulatory burden.” That's the conversation that we need to continue to get down to. That's what we look to our business leaders and stakeholders to be able to provide us with—the kind of advice we need to be able to make those decisions. And that's actually where we win the day, because we're acting in the public good, in the public interest, but also creating a more competitive environment.

I've had the privilege, on and off, of being responsible for this file. I'd be responsible for it in one post—and I've had seven different posts in this government—and then I'd lose it for a while, and I'd always keep my eye on it, and then I'd get it back, and then I'd lose it for a while, and then I'd get it back again.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite, I think, is suggesting it sounds like I have trouble keeping a job. There may be some truth to that, I say to the member opposite, but at least I keep landing on my feet after, and continue the issues—and I continue to work passionately to reduce regulatory burden.

I want to also begin by thanking the Open for Business team. When this bill originally came forward, it was similar to the previous bill that we did. It was going to reduce—and I'll speak to a little bit of this in a

moment—a number of different regulatory burdens. We'd done a lot of consulting. It was a good, ambitious bill.

When I brought it to the Premier, the Premier said, “This is good. It probably does even more than the last bill does. We're pleased with it. Of course, we're going to support it. My critics may well end up supporting this as well.” This is not one of those bills that tends to get into the political limelight. But what the Premier said was, “It's good, but we've got to find a way to make it stronger.”

There are a lot of uncertainties in the economy today. You look at what's going on south of the border, you look at the NAFTA negotiations, you look at some of the challenges worldwide: There's lots of uncertainty.

We're doing really, really well right now; we know that. Our unemployment rate is at a 16-year low. We've created 760,000 new jobs since the global recession. We continue to lead the G7 in growth, which is a good place for our economy to be. Most economists are suggesting that we've been on a pretty good track for some extended period of time, and I think we're on a good track going forward. But it is an uncertain world out there, a fast-disrupting global economy, which means that we need to pick up every opportunity that we have to drive that technological disruption here, to invest in innovation, to help our companies scale up. To do that, we need to make sure we are the best place to invest in the world.

That's something that we are close to doing now. Our Open for Business program has put in place word-class efforts to reduce regulatory burden—and I'll speak to some of that—but we can never tire; we can never pull back from that. We must always be passionate, knowing that every time we come forward with a bill like this, as soon as we're done, we're going to find more things we can do—and that's good. That's back and forth, and that's to and fro. Ideas from the opposition are welcome in this effort because, in the end, the public benefits.

If we're more competitive as an economy, businesses are going to invest more, we're going to create more jobs, and we're going to continue to lead the G7 in growth going forward. We're going to be able to fulfill what I think ultimately is our goal, and that's to pass on a strong and vibrant economy to the next generation. After all, I think that really is what it's all about, as far as I'm concerned.

We've had the privilege of being recognized for our efforts from time to time, which is good—maybe not in headlines, but so many of our stakeholders have recognized our efforts, including the CFIB, which I give a lot of credit to for a lot of the ideas that we've generated through the years.

I talked about our Open for Business shop, a very entrepreneurial crew who, with very little budget, frankly, do some fantastic work—a lot of visioning, a lot of outreach and a lot of creative work. When the Premier asked me to step it up, I turned to them to say, “How do we step this up? Bring me a really ambitious package.” That's what they've done. They've brought forward a

package, some of which is in this legislation, others of which were announced when we indicated the intention to do this legislation—a package that is beyond a doubt the most ambitious regulatory burden reduction package that we've seen in this province in generations. That's a good thing.

Mr. Randy Hillier: That's a stretch—

Hon. Brad Duguid: No. The member thinks it's a stretch; it really isn't.

Again, it's not going to get us re-elected; it's not going to get us headlines. But it is going to make a difference.

We'll talk about some of the initiatives in there as well.

If the members have other ideas, we'll put them in the next package. We want to continue—

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've got a list.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member has a list, and I'm glad to see it.

This is something we need to continually strive to do. If we ever say that we're done, that means that, in my view, we'll stay stagnant and other jurisdictions will pass us in a second.

Again, to the crew at the Open for Business unit in the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth: Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for your passion. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for listening to our business community. And thank you for helping me, as the minister, and my parliamentary assistant put forward a piece of legislation and a package that really will make a difference.

I mentioned the CFIB. I want to thank them for their input. I also want to thank them for recognizing the work that this unit and, frankly, I have been able to do through the years. I often joke about the fact that we are the only government and I'm the only minister to have ever been nominated for the prestigious Golden Scissors Award four times.

Applause.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not saying that to get applause, because I was nominated the first three times and didn't win. It was nice to get nominated. I joked about it at the time, because Leonardo DiCaprio had been nominated three times, I think, for Academy Awards and had not won. I was beginning to think of myself as the Leonardo DiCaprio of politics in Ontario. But Leonardo DiCaprio won the next year, so that took that line away from me.

But guess what? On my fourth nomination, we finally won it. I didn't bring it today because it would be a prop, but I do have, proudly, on my desk, the Golden Scissors Award—which I didn't win myself. Our team won, and I thank the CFIB for their recognition of that. I thank the opposition as well, because their initiative in pushing us helped drive us to those new heights.

I want to begin by outlining a little bit what I referred to as some of the global best practices in reducing regulatory burden. I hinted about this a little bit earlier: The best ideas in reducing regulatory burden don't come from the minister, don't come from the parliamentary

assistant, generally don't come—no offence—from the critics, don't come from this Legislature, and don't really come from the Open for Business team or my colleagues and our ministries in government. Some good ideas come from there, but the best ideas come from the business community itself, the folks on the front line who are actually the ones who are being impacted by those rules and regulations. They're the ones who know those rules, regulations, and standards and procedures that really are unnecessary and that do get in their way of doing business in this province.

1350

So our Open for Business strategy has always been about reaching outside of this precinct to what's going on outside of here, what's going on in our businesses, to our business leaders—and initially it was our business leaders that we consulted with—our associations and our stakeholders. That's who we turned to first.

The first global leading initiative was an Open for Business initiative called Open for Business round tables—hugely successful. We did about a dozen or so different sectors. What we did is we brought the entire sector in, the leaders in that sector and the associations, and we sat them around a table with the minister and ministers in the government—not just the minister responsible for red tape reduction, but the ministers responsible for the regulations as well. We would brainstorm about all the different challenges that we had and we'd pick five or six initiatives that we knew we could resolve. Then, the government would commit to getting those off the table and into action within about six months.

That process worked really well because the business community, right off the bat, saw success, action and commitment right from the very beginning. They saw the ministries and ministers that they needed to deal with on a face-to-face basis right there at the table so they didn't have to go out and negotiate through a number of different arms and silos of government. We brought forward hundreds of changes that were really, really important to those business.

So those round tables worked really well, but one of the things we found is that we were consistently talking to the same people—talented people, skilled people, people who knew what they were talking about, who were helpful, but they were the leaders of organizations and businesses. We really weren't talking to the front-line workers, many of whom on a day-to-day basis face the rules and regulations and red tape that we're trying to do what we can to improve.

So we looked around the world—this is an idea that we didn't think of ourselves—but this is one that my Open for Business team did come up with: By looking around the world for best practices happening in other places, we were being seen as a global leader in this area, but we weren't so arrogant as to think that just because we're seen as a global leader, we have all the good ideas. We recognize that there are other good things going on out there.

One program that we saw that seemed to be working was a program called the Red Tape Challenge in Great

Britain; I think that's what they call it as well. We decided that we were going to do that here, and we developed a made-in-Ontario approach to this.

The key with the Red Tape Challenge is that it uses technology in an innovative way and it uses our capacity online to reach out beyond the boardrooms and beyond those round tables to every single Ontarian, in particular those who are interested in a particular sector—for instance, our first venture was in the auto parts sector—so that front-line workers in that auto parts sector would be able to participate in the process online and have that online to-and-fro discussion with us. That program has proven to be a huge success, because it's open to everyone. Everyone in the province can participate, and the participation has actually been really impressive, in particular for a new program.

In all, there are seven industries that we have planned to tackle. The feedback has been really, really helpful. The first industry was the auto parts manufacturing sector. The second is the food processing sector. The third is financial services. The fourth is mining. The fifth is chemical manufacturing. The sixth is forestry and tourism. I'm sure when we're done there, or maybe even before, we'll expand our horizons because this program seems to be working really, really well.

On the auto parts manufacturing sector, we found 41 regulatory burdens that we could address, and we're in the process now of addressing those. Some of them aren't easy; it's going to take us about three years to get all of that implemented, but we've got 41 good areas of direction.

The other area that we've moved into now is the food processing sector and financial services, where we've completed consultations this year. In food processing, we identified 26 areas that we could address. In financial services, we identified a dozen areas that we could address. These are tangible ways to make improvement. Not one of these particular areas is going to change life overall for these sectors, but they all help, and they all came from the sectors. They were the initiatives that were really troubling the sectors.

The next sectors we're going to tackle are chemical manufacturing—that has begun already and is ongoing—mining, forestry and tourism. I'm sure we'll be able to find some good things we can do with those sectors. So I'm excited about where this new program is going, and I think that this program is a really good way to involve all Ontarians in this effort.

Back in 2014—I want to thank the CFIB again for their leadership on this—the CFIB recommended to us that we put forward an annual report for burden reduction. A couple of years ago now, we put that report forward. What that does is hold our feet to the fire when it comes to regulatory burden reduction. It analyzes what we've done to reduce regulatory burden. As well, it analyzes what we've done—this was one of the asks of the CFIB—to reduce the amount of time that businesses have to spend fulfilling regulations, filling out paperwork and that kind of thing. We have had that report come

forward now, and it has been very helpful to our efforts. So again, thank you to the CFIB for that.

Another initiative that we embarked upon, one that I was proud to champion, was something that I developed in conjunction with Mayor John Tory. What we realized is that one thing we found businesses saying to us is, "It's not only the regulations that the province has in isolation that we would like to see reduced or changed; often, it's regulations or inspection systems that different governments have. Sometimes they contrast and conflict. They're uncoordinated, and that drives us crazy as businesses."

Surely the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario can find better ways of helping folks apply for a restaurant licence, for instance. The current process is phenomenal. Dozens and dozens of different forms have to be filled out, different bodies have to be sought after—surely we can find a way to provide one-window approaches to those kinds of regulatory licensing, dual-government types of responsibilities. So we sat down with Mayor Tory and his departments, and my ministries did the same.

We weren't leaving the rest of the province out. This wasn't a city-of-Toronto-specific initiative. I think all recognize that the city of Toronto is involved in a lot more regulations than many other municipalities, so what we could find there may apply across the province or may not, but a lot of it could be extrapolated, so we also invited AMO to sit at the table with us to participate. That's a process that's now well under way in identifying dozens of different ways that we can work better with the other levels of government.

I'm looking at the clock now, and I turn to my parliamentary assistant. Does that mean that I have five and a half minutes left?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Pretty much.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've barely gotten into my content already, and I'm having way too much fun. I think I could go on for hours on this, but I want to leave some time for my parliamentary assistant.

Applause.

Hon. Brad Duguid: And I think the members opposite would appreciate that as well. They're clapping, because I think they'd appreciate that as well.

So I'm going to move from past to present, and just to sum up by saying that some of what I've talked about and our other initiatives have helped us to eliminate 80,000 regulatory burdens through the years. That's substantial. It's something to be proud of, but as the Premier said, we need to continue to do more, and that's what this bill is all about.

This bill, in all, is a collaboration of many different ministries within our government. I thank all of my colleagues who have participated for bringing forward the measures that they have. It amends more than 40 statutes in supporting our goal of making Ontario more competitive. It's a bill that comes with a package that, as I said earlier, is one of the most ambitious regulatory burden packages that this province has ever embarked upon.

One of the centerpieces of this package is something that I say is a method for us to stop the digging. By digging, I mean imposing more regulations. As we remove regulations, other regulations often have to come forward, for all the right reasons, but it's really important that we build a culture in government, throughout government, that when a ministry brings forward regulations, they're thinking about the cost to business. So there's going to be a new stipulation that for every dollar in administrative costs that is incurred by a business from a measure, a new regulation, being brought forward by a ministry, that ministry will have to identify \$1.25 in savings. It's a bit of a barrier, a bit of a governor, for ministries to say, "Go ahead and make your changes. They're in the public interest, I'm sure. Let's make sure that they are. But make sure you're keeping an eye on the administrative costs to businesses as you do that."

1400

Another thing that's in this package is the need to harmonize regulations. That's something that we need to do across the country.

Of course, we led the Canadian Free Trade Agreement initiative. We were the first jurisdiction in the world to put in place a mechanism nationally, and it's in the process, still, of being put in place. The ministers will meet again in the fall to determine the progress that we've made on this, but it will happen. It is a mechanism that will mutually recognize regulations across the country. It's the first time that we're aware of anywhere in the world that such a structure has been put in place, something that our business community from coast to coast is very excited about.

It's more than that. We also have to harmonize regulations with jurisdictions south of the border. What that means is that when we're putting in new regulations, it doesn't always have to be a made-in-Ontario solution. We do have to look at best practices across the continent, and we do have to look at the balance of having our own way and the balance of harmonizing what we're doing with other jurisdictions around the world, in North America, with the United States and across the country. It's something we need to do.

Another thing we need to do is consider the unique needs of small businesses whenever we're putting in regulations, because they have unique needs. They don't always have the staffing capability or the capacity to be able to respond to some of the demands that are being put on small businesses, so we have to put that small business lens on everything we do as a government and on every regulation we bring in place. This new package will ensure that we do that.

We need to recognize and reward businesses that have good compliance records. Rather than have widespread enforcement mechanisms that spend time very thinly on a bunch of different businesses, let's focus more on the bad actors and focus less on those businesses that have good track records. In my view, what that will mean is that it will help our enforcement mechanisms be even more effective.

We have to ensure, as well, that businesses, when they're interfacing with our government, can do so easily. Look, we're in the modern age now. I'd like to think so anyway, and the minister responsible for the digitalization of government will 100% agree. In fact, it's with her authorization that I can stand before you and say that part of the package is a guarantee that all businesses will now have the ability to interact with government in a digitalized way online, which will help save them time and money. I already have businesses talking about how important that is to them.

The minister responsible for small business and I have worked very closely on further packages that target small businesses. I don't have too much time left but I'm going to touch on a few of those and then pass it over to my parliamentary assistant.

We're reducing fees for small businesses at every opportunity. There are a lot of niggling little fees that small businesses have to pay for a variety of different items and things. We're going to do everything we can to look at those fees. Where we can reduce them or even eliminate them, we will do that. We've already started to do that with a number of the fees.

We've created a one-window small business service. Approaching government can be intimidating, in particular for a small business person. They don't have the capacity to have a government relations person on staff. They're just a business person who maybe has two or three or maybe a dozen or more staff members. They have to contact government themselves. There are too many ministries for them to contact, so we're creating a one-window approach so that our small businesses will have one place to turn. When they have ideas, when they have challenges, when they have areas where they think that we need to improve in terms of regulatory burden, they'll now have one window to be able to access that.

The other area that I hear from small businesses, in particular growth businesses, high-tech businesses and some in health care, is that they don't only need our support in helping them grow—and we're there to support them through our small business initiatives and our small business centres, our mentoring programs and whatnot; what they also need sometimes is simply a contract that provides a platform for them with their new and emerging technologies to then take their technologies global.

Our procurement process in this province has always been very stringent, as it should be. It protects our taxpayers' interests; it's very accountable. We need to open up that process so that small businesses can have more opportunities within what is a very lucrative area for businesses, and that's government contracts, an important area for small businesses to be able to bring forward their innovations. That's going to help the business of government become more innovative. It's going to help improve things like our health care system, because we're going to have the latest and greatest and most modern innovations in our system. But it's also going to provide our small businesses with an opportu-

ity to grow and be able to go global, once they have the government of Ontario as part of their business platform.

I am going to stop there, Mr. Speaker, and turn it over now to my trusty parliamentary assistant, who will take us home over the course of the next 27 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. I would like to thank the minister for his remarks introducing the second reading of this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, if you would indulge me in allowing me to take this opportunity as well to thank the minister for his years of hard work and guidance on this file: Thank you, Minister, for taking on this challenge and this responsibility in ensuring that we're reducing red tape for businesses right across Ontario, and congratulations on the Golden Scissors Award.

The minister laid out a very clear case for why burden reduction efforts are essential to keep our economy competitive and open for business. As well, he also described in detail the context that this bill was conceived within and how it furthers the tremendous work this government has done on the file.

I want to thank the House for this opportunity to go into more detail about the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017. I know from the minister, from my constituents in Davenport and from my own career in the private sector that businesses want a modern, streamlined and efficient regulatory system. Ontario's economy is going through a period of generational renewal and modernization. Our traditional sectors are converging with transformative technologies, and we must maintain our competitive edge.

The Business Growth Initiative is our strategy to accelerate a knowledge-based innovation economy and increase the province's global competitiveness. This five-year, \$650-million initiative is guided by the following principles:

- creating a strong innovation-driven economy through the development and deployment of advanced technology;
- catapulting more Ontario businesses forward through scaling up; and
- lowering business costs through modernized regulations.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, cutting red tape is a core pillar of our plan. With this in mind, the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth has introduced a package of legislative amendments that are intended to reduce regulatory burdens and practices that cost businesses time and money, while protecting environmental, health and worker safety standards, while achieving cost savings for our business community.

The ministry worked with five partner ministries and is proposing amendments to more than 40 different statutes. Highlights of the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, include:

- implementing a number of recommendations from the Business Law Advisory Council to update and reform Ontario's corporate and commercial law statutes;

- facilitating electronic delivery service delivery and taking steps to enable proclamation of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act; and

- enabling automatic electronic service delivery and issuance of pesticide licences, if prescribed requirements are met.

I should note that the ministry consulted with a number of stakeholders in the development of this bill, and we have received a positive response that I would like to share for the record. I'm going to quote Richard Koroscil, interim president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. He said:

“The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is pleased to see the Ontario government prioritize the reduction of regulatory burdens faced by Ontario businesses. Building on the success of the Red Tape Challenge, this legislation demonstrates a commitment to the continued competitiveness and prosperity of our province. We appreciate the ongoing partnership between government and the OCC, as we continue to advocate for a reduction in red tape to spur economic growth and development across Ontario.”

1410

It is clear from Mr. Koroscil's response that efforts to reduce unnecessary red tape and undue regulatory burden are critically important to the province's business community. It is an issue that my own constituents have often brought to my attention. It is essential to remember what lies at the heart of this bill: It is about ensuring we have a competitive business environment so that companies invest here in Ontario and create and support the jobs of today and tomorrow. That is what really matters to the people of our province, Mr. Speaker. When we shed overly cumbersome or unnecessary burdens, we are opening the door for more opportunity for the businesses in our province.

Of course, as the minister mentioned, we know that some regulations are necessary. We are undertaking streamlining and rationalizing the regulations, keeping in mind that we must also protect the environment and health standards, and enhance worker and consumer safety. We have taken a holistic approach across our ministry and the partner ministries to make sure we are safeguarding necessary regulations. Our approach has never been geared towards deregulation. This government strongly believes in the role of regulation to protect community: the public, workers, and the environment.

It is also true that strong regulation can be good economic policy as well. For example, our agricultural products are in high demand in other parts of the world because of their unparalleled quality and our regulatory system that ensures the highest standards in food safety.

We firmly believe that the government can reduce the cost of regulation to businesses while maintaining the strong standards that support our quality of life here in the province. To that end, this is the second bill the gov-

ernment has brought forward as part of its commitment to make annual legislative changes that reduce direct and indirect regulatory burden on Ontario businesses.

You'll remember that the first annual bill, the Burden Reduction Act, 2017, was passed in March 2017. That act amended more than 50 statutes from 11 different ministries to reduce regulatory burdens and practices that cost businesses time and money, while protecting environmental and health standards and enhancing worker safety. The amendments will provide Ontario businesses up to \$31.5 million in savings per year.

As I said, this bill had input from five partner ministries and is proposing amendments to more than 40 different statutes. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the burden reduction that will occur across our ministry and our partner ministries should the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, be passed.

Schedule 4 of the bill, if passed, would introduce a brand new act called the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, which contains the five new burden initiatives that the minister mentioned. To quickly summarize, this act, if passed, will:

- place a requirement for government to offset new administrative costs imposed on business through a reduction in existing costs;
- mandate a less onerous compliance framework for small businesses, where appropriate;
- increase harmonization with other jurisdictions and encourage the adoption of international or national standards, where appropriate, when developing or reviewing regulations;
- mandate that businesses must have an option to submit documents electronically to the government; and
- recognize businesses that have a good compliance record.

These five initiatives guided the design of the overall bill. They support the Business Growth Initiative by modernizing government lines of business, removing unnecessary regulatory burden, and reforming Ontario's business laws. These are changes that will help businesses large and small to prosper in our province.

Of course, the question of just exactly how much money will be saved by implementing the changes must be addressed. I'm happy to say the estimated cost savings were quantified for four of the five proposals above that impacted discrete sectors. It is estimated that businesses impacted by these proposals can realize between \$6.3 million to \$8.9 million in cost savings.

As I mentioned, this bill is not just the product of the work done by the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth. In order to make real change, we had to coordinate with other ministries. The results, as you will see, are impressive.

Here is a short synopsis of the changes that our partner ministries will make.

The Ministry of the Attorney General's proposed changes include amendments to the Charities Accounting Act that would allow charities to make social investments

that help further their purpose and achieve a financial return. The amendments will allow charitable organizations to make social investments consistent with their mission by exempting these types of investments from restrictive prudent investor rules.

Currently, the law is not clear whether charities can make social investments. The amendments in the bill before us will specifically authorize charities to make such investments. It will give charities more flexibility and another tool to use their assets more effectively. This amendment in particular will position Ontario as a leader in facilitating social investing activities. I should note, as well, that there are a number of safeguards that will be imposed to maintain the public's trust and confidence in charities.

As well, a number of amendments will be made to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act, including:

- clarifying that people over the age of 64 may apply to become judges and justices of the peace;
- designating the Superior Court of Justice to manage complaints against the Small Claims Court administrative judge, including giving the Superior Court of Justice the power to investigate complaints and, if appropriate, discipline the judge for his or her conduct; and
- making certain tribunal costs orders under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement enforceable as court orders. The change would preserve the ability of Ontario businesses and the Ontario government to challenge trade barriers in other provinces and territories.

The Notaries Act will be amended to remove the requirement for a non-lawyer notary public to be a Canadian citizen.

The Juries Act will also be amended to permit electronic options for jurors to return their jury eligibility questionnaires and to receive jury summonses, and the deadline for returning a jury questionnaire will be extended from five to 30 days. The extension of time for jurors to respond to juror eligibility questionnaires was recommended by a committee composed of government and indigenous officials which was established in response to Justice Iacobucci's independent review of the report on First Nations Representation on Ontario Juries. The committee did extensive consultation in indigenous communities before making its recommendation. The Office of the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice has no concerns about this proposal.

Other technical and housekeeping amendments will be made to modernize outdated wording in French and English, and to improve accessibility.

From our partners at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services there were a number of amendments. The Land Registration Reform Act will be amended to allow electronic registration of survey plans. Electronic submission and registration of plans will reduce the burden on land surveyors, saving mostly small business owners the time and the cost of converting their electronic files to hard-copy plans and delivering those plans to the land registration office.

The Land Titles Act will be amended to allow for a single name to be used to register documents within the land registration system where that single name is permitted under the Vital Statistics Act and the Change of Name Act.

The amendments to the Corporations Information Act and a number of other business law statutes will facilitate implementation of the new modern business registration system and ensure that related provisions are appropriately aligned, including:

- modernizing service delivery and enable electronic access to all modern business registration system services;

- providing the director with broadened duties and powers to support and implement more efficient and flexible service delivery under a new electronic system; and

- making amendments to provide greater consistency across the business law statutes and enable a future business law reform agenda.

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As well, the proposed amendments would enable the future proclamation of the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). I would also like to thank the Ontario Nonprofit Network and other stakeholders such as the Ontario Bar Association for their hard work in bringing forward these amendments.

The proposed amendments to the Corporations Act would enable Ontario not-for-profit corporations to benefit from some of the ONCA features prior to its proclamation, such as allowing notice of members' meetings to be sent electronically and members' meetings to be held electronically. These proposed amendments would increase flexibility, encourage participation in meetings, provide clarity and reduce burdens and costs for not-for-profit corporations.

I would like to thank the Business Law Advisory Council for their recommendations to update and reform Ontario's corporate and commercial law statutes. The proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act would increase shareholder democracy and increase flexibility in private corporations.

The proposed amendments to the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000 would increase clarity in Ontario's franchise law, including franchiser and disclosure obligations to prospective franchisees.

The proposed amendments to the Personal Property Security Act would reduce costs to lenders, lessors and repairers by providing greater certainty.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs proposed amendments to the Municipal Elections Act that would provide clarity that compliance audit committees may deliberate in private for the purpose of making decisions. This is important so they may speak freely when they review evidence and submissions. This amendment would provide more consistency across the province and may also prevent the use of stock written decisions that are prepared in advance due to the inability of compliance audit committee members to meet and speak in private.

I should add that the issue has been raised by a number of municipalities following the release of the Ontario Ombudsman July 2016 report regarding his investigation of the city of Hamilton's compliance audit committee. As well, the issue was raised by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO. AMO takes the position that a legislative change is required to address this issue.

Our partners at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change proposed amendments to the Pesticides Act that would transition the pesticide licensing program from paper-based to online service delivery. Licences would be issued automatically online if prescribed requirements are met. This change would eliminate approximately 5,200 paper-based applications the ministry receives each year, providing a faster, more efficient way to get a licence.

The proposed amendments to the Environmental Protection Act will allow the ministry to make certain information about pesticide licences publicly available online, supporting a transparent and open government. To respond to business needs while maintaining environmental protection, the ministry is implementing an ongoing transformational agenda, using a risk-based approach while reducing regulatory burden on businesses and enhancing program service delivery.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the proposal is for the appointment of multiple vice-chairs to the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board. This amendment would increase the board's capacity to manage the hearing process and shorten wait times for hearings by alleviating the burden of only having two members capable of chairing a hearing. This will shorten wait times for decisions by alleviating the burden of only having two members capable of writing decisions. This is an answer to stakeholders' frustrations regarding the length of time it takes to bring matters before the board to a resolution.

The unifying reason behind all of these amendments is the fact that outdated, unnecessary or unclear regulations and their compliance requirements can take businesses away from the important work that creates jobs and grows the economy, and can cost billions in time and money to complete paperwork, fees and expenses.

The proposed legislative amendments that I just detailed are intended to improve economic efficiency and foster innovation, while continuing to provide strong social and environmental protections. The list of proposed amendments are, at their heart, about simplifying, streamlining and creating more user-friendly services that will improve public protections by making it easier for businesses to understand and comply with requirements, as well as making it easier for ministries to focus on what's most important.

Of course, the measures I just detailed are only some of the burden reduction activities the government is undertaking. There is a lot more that is being done in this area. As I mentioned, it is a key pillar of the Business Growth Initiative and as such has been a top priority for our ministry.

At this point, I think it would be instructive to take a look at some of the other burden reduction efforts we have undertaken.

We have committed to releasing an annual burden reduction report. The report profiles initiatives that are reducing burdens and making it easier for business and other stakeholders to succeed, including providing more online services, simplifying processes and modernizing regulations. The latest annual report, released on June 27, 2017, features an estimated savings of \$152 million and 6.5 million hours to business since 2011. This surpasses, by more than 50%, the government's target of saving \$100 million by the end of 2017.

As a ministry, we also conducted Open for Business round tables in 10 sectors and addressed 50 priority items, including:

- reduction in length of the WSIB no-lost-time form, form 7, by 60%;
- standardized food premise inspection reporting/food handler training programs;
- speeding up water-taking permits for low-impact construction and road-building projects; and
- streamlining the number of permits required for development of residential subdivisions.

We are also implementing measures under Ontario's regulatory policy to ensure new regulations are well developed and avoid imposing unnecessary costs on business. Tools and processes include:

- regulatory impact analysis, to ensure costs and benefits of significant regulations are understood before regulations are approved;
- mandatory review policy, to ensure outdated or redundant regulations with high impacts on businesses are regularly revisited, and amended or eliminated if necessary;
- twice-annual effective dates, to make Ontario's business climate more predictable by requiring new regulations affecting business to come into effect twice a year, on January 1 and July 1, so businesses can plan ahead; and

- a regulatory registry to make business regulations more transparent by allowing 45 days for comments on new regulatory proposals. In 2016, there were approximately 400,000 visitors to the site; 232 postings, including postings on regulatory proposals and discussion papers; and 1,054 comments received from the public.

There are also a number of initiatives that Minister Duguid mentioned. Suffice to say, this government has a strong plan to root out unnecessary red tape and build a modern, responsive regulatory system that achieves outcomes while minimizing the impact on business.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will be an important part of our ongoing efforts to make Ontario the best and easiest place in the world to do business. Our government has already been doing a fantastic job of this, and we look forward to continuing this great work. This government continues to create jobs and create prosperity, while at the same time making sure that all Ontarians can share in

that prosperity. Our highest priority is to make Ontario a place for businesses to invest and grow so that our children and our children's children will be able to have the best chance to live long and prosper.

This bill will help us to create the high-quality jobs that will propel this province into the future. I would like to thank the government for introducing this bill, and I would like to thank all members for their attention today as I detailed some of the many highlights of this very important bill here this afternoon. Thank you, and I look forward to further debate.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure listening to the debate today on An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals.

Of course, when you read that and hear that, you have to first say, "Well, we all know what red tape is, and all red tape is unnecessary, so isn't there something at play here with the words?" So I just want to put on the record that red tape, as defined, is rules and regulations that are "unnecessary and prevent things from being done quickly and easily." It is the "bureaucratic practice of hair splitting or foot dragging," or "routine or procedures marked by excessive complexity," resulting in delays and inaction. That's just a few of the definitions for red tape. But this bill is going to just deal with the unnecessary red tape. So it's quite interesting that, of course, this bill implies that there must be necessary red tape.

I think, when reading this bill, the word that comes to my mind is "circumlocution," in that circumlocution is "the use of many words when fewer would do, especially in a deliberate attempt to be vague or evasive." We've got a roundabout ministry here. There is nothing in this bill that is required to be tabled in legislation to be done. Everything about reducing and having a more efficient bureaucracy is in the minister's wheelhouse. This bill is an unnecessary piece of red tape.

I do look forward to continuing the debate on this, and I do have a long list of measures for the minister to consider in his next bill that he brings—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est assez intéressant qu'aujourd'hui, la journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, on parle de ce projet de loi.

Je dois vous dire que quand il vient aux francophones qui veulent avoir accès aux services en français, ce n'est pas toujours évident. Là, on nous propose des changements à 40 lois existantes différentes. Déjà là, ça me rend très nerveuse.

Dans un deuxième temps, je vois en nulle part là-dedans où est-ce qu'on va s'assurer que les services en français, qui sont déjà très difficiles à avoir dans plusieurs parties de la province, vont devenir plus faciles. Pourquoi est-ce qu'on ne prendrait pas cette opportunité, dans laquelle on va faire des changements à 40 projets de

lois différents, pour donner aux francophones, en cette journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, des réassurances?

En ce moment, ce qu'on voit là-dedans, c'est un peu ce qu'on a vu la dernière fois lorsque le gouvernement libéral nous avait promis un projet de loi de la sorte. C'est là qu'on a vu qu'il y aurait la privatisation de certaines agences—entre autres, Place de l'Ontario, Ontario Place—qui étaient dans le dernier projet de loi.

Donc, je suis inquiète, dans un premier temps, parce que c'est un projet de loi qui est quand même assez volumineux, qui change beaucoup de choses.

Dans un deuxième temps, je me dis : quelle occasion ratée. Là où on a besoin de services en français garantis, pourquoi on ne les met pas dans ce projet de loi-là en même temps pour s'assurer que le gouvernement rencontre ses obligations envers la Loi sur les services en français et s'assure que, partout en Ontario où les gens en font la demande, ils auront accès à des services en français de qualité? Donc, inquiète et une opportunité ratée.

On va faire plus de commentaires face à ça dans les jours à suivre.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to rise, and I want to start by congratulating the minister, who really has been the rightful recipient of the Golden Scissors Award. This is a fellow who has been focused on reducing red tape for as long as I've known him, and I want to say thank you for that.

I'm interested in the linguistic excellence of the member opposite. I'm not sure we've heard the word "circumlocution" here too, too often.

But I do worry that the member opposite just thinks we should eliminate all the regulations. I think that in his perfect Ontario, there would be no laws, no rules and no regulations. Actually, on this side of the House, we think that some of those regulations are necessary to ensure the health and the safety of the people of this province.

I like very much that this is a principle-driven piece of legislation. I want to take a minute and just talk about the five new guiding principles that will be considered when new regulations come into place.

The first is that for every dollar of new administrative burden, the existing administrative burden will be offset by \$1.25, so we will be saving businesses money every time we bring in a new regulation.

We're looking at harmonizing with other jurisdictions. Business very much appreciates when our regulations match regulations in other jurisdictions, because it saves them unnecessary red tape.

We're looking at the unique needs of small businesses, when enacting any new regulations, by establishing a small-business lens when we're creating regulations that could impact them.

We're looking at ways to recognize and reward businesses that have a good compliance record.

We're guaranteeing the option to submit any documentation electronically.

All of these are good principles, Speaker.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to address some of the concerns I have with this bill, based on my own experience. I'd like to make sure that the Minister of Economic Development and Growth hears some of these things.

For about 36 years, I had a trucking licence, and I used to do it part-time. I was farming and doing that a little bit. I was always amazed at what happened when we hit the Manitoba border: The rules changed. We had to load our trucks differently; we had to do this and that.

I had a company that called me up in Listowel. They had a transformer blow out at their recycling plant, and they found one in Edmonton. It took a day to get the permit. This was an oversized load, so they had to get a permit to bring it from Edmonton to here in Ontario. But then they had to buy another one in Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: How many days?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Six days to get this permit.

I hope the minister is listening to this, because I want to help him out with this. That's what happens with the trucking industry when you go west in this country. Everything changes on you. It's very difficult to conduct your business.

I remember bringing cattle back from Manitoba. We couldn't put as many cattle in one part of the trailer as we did in Ontario, so we had to move the trailer's fifth wheel back on the truck. Then when we got out of Manitoba, we had to bring it ahead, because we weren't balanced right in Ontario.

It was crazy things like that, dealing with the trucking industry, that I hope the minister can address or would address. I think if he talks to the OTA and some of these companies, they can tell him of some of these inconsistencies with the trucking industry. It would surely make life a lot more bearable, if you're in that business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Economic Development so he can reply.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—I think that if we shorten the name of his riding, with all the regulations that mention our ridings, it probably would cut a few pieces of paper out of our regulations—the member for Nickel Belt, the Deputy Premier and the member for Perth-Wellington.

To the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington: There are a lot of regulations that are absolutely crucial. I know the member knows this, and you'd better speak to that when you do get a chance to speak to the bill. Otherwise, what you seem to say is that there are no necessary regulations, which means you don't care about water safety; you don't care about road safety; you don't care about safety in workplaces—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Environmental safety.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —you don't care about environmental safety and clean air; and you don't care about food safety, so I think that it's important—

Mr. Randy Hillier: I think you're engaged in circumlocutions.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Maybe you could clarify that when you speak.

Yes, in answer to your question: Call it red tape or call it regulations, but there are necessary regulations and then there are unnecessary regulations. What we're out to get rid of are the unnecessary regulations that aren't there protecting public safety and the public interest but, rather, are not necessary.

I want to thank the others who spoke as well.

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The member for Perth–Wellington: It's the kind of thing that you brought forward. I'm not that familiar with the precise regulation, but that's the kind of thing that drives our businesses crazy. When you drive across this country and things like axle weights are different when you go through provinces like Manitoba—we've got to tackle that.

This bill doesn't do that in and of itself. It commits us, moving forward with new regulations, to take that into consideration. What we did with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, however, does tackle that type of initiative. It's one at a time, bit by bit, but we've got to do it.

In the 10 seconds that are left, Mr. Speaker: We're in a good place right now; our economy is doing well, but we've got to keep plowing ahead. We've got to make Ontario the easiest place in the world in which to invest, and that's what this bill tries to help us accomplish.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we resume debate on this bill, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Crack assumes ballot item number 47 and Mr. Colle assumes ballot item number 1 from the draw on August 14, 2017; and Mrs. Mangat assumes ballot item number 56 and Madame Des Rosiers assumes ballot item number 4 from the draw on August 14, 2017.

Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to rise this afternoon, and I'm pleased to respond to Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act.

I want to begin by paying tribute to Minister Duguid, and to say that I've been here now for six years, and for most of those six years I've been a critic to this minister. I had a short stint at labour in the last Parliament, and I'm glad to be back at economic development. I know the minister has given many years to public service. On behalf of our caucus—I know I've said this to you personally a couple of times—thank you for your contributions to the province and, of course, to the city and the people of Scarborough, and to Canada.

I also want to thank the minister for sending his team over this morning at 9 o'clock for a ministerial briefing on Bill 154. It gave us enough time to prepare somewhat a one-hour lead this afternoon. We were cutting it close, but we had a very good conversation this morning with the staff from his ministry. They're a very qualified staff,

and you've got good people working there, Minister. So thank you for that, and thank you to them.

I know I've spoken about red tape and government rules and regulations many times since I've been here—six years—with a lot of it coming from running, owning and operating a small business myself before coming to Queen's Park. I'm always happy to see legislation coming forward to address red tape. I hear so often from businesses that are fed up with having to focus on dealing with government bureaucracy and compliance instead of growing their business. It's true: I think all members, when they're back in their communities or constituencies or talking to their small businesses—often you'll walk in and you'll say, "How are things going?", and they always talk about the fight they have with government over some ministry rule or some government regulation.

Resources and attention are diverted from seeking new opportunities, innovating products and processes, and finding efficiencies to trying to figure out cap-and-trade and the government's various energy schemes, or tracking the proposed labour changes, or hand-holding inspectors through redundant evaluations.

The cost of this red tape to our economy is estimated at about \$14 billion. There have been a number of third-party studies that have validated that the cost to the economy is about \$14 billion.

Just to highlight the issues that I face in my riding with one of my local businesses: I left here a couple of Thursdays ago, and there was a grand opening of a business in Strathroy, in my riding. They spent, the owner told me, about a million dollars on this new facility, and he spent \$500,000 on modern spraying equipment to paint kitchen cabinets. The engineer was there and the supplier of this equipment was there, and apparently they've sold 200 of these \$500,000 units across the country, many in Ontario. He went to have his grand opening, and, of course, the inspector was there and said, "Sorry, you can't operate this." They needed to spend approximately \$30,000 in upgrading this equipment. But the engineer was there and the supplier was there, and they have almost 100 of these across the province—as I said, 200 across Canada.

A lot of times, from the business perspective, it feels like it depends on who the local inspector is. There needs to be, even across the province, some more—it just needs to have the same standards across the province. Speaker, this is a real and significant issue. It's not only an impediment to businesses but a deterrent to investment and job creation.

The Progressive Conservatives support reducing burdensome red tape, eliminating redundancies and streamlining regulations. Businesses in this province have a lot going against them because of this government and the decisions they've made over the last 14 years in some cases, like high energy costs. In some cases it was a chaotic regulatory environment to start with. We need to be taking real action here to help them be competitive.

CFIB conservatively estimates that the cost of regulation in Ontario has grown from just under \$13 billion to

almost \$15 billion from 2005 to 2014. So it's safe to say this is not an area in which the government truly has excelled over the last 14 years. In saying that, I'm happy—I think this is about the second year in a row that there has been legislation coming forward to deal with a very small dollar amount of savings when it comes to red tape. Unfortunately, again, we have a pretty ho-hum effort from this government on reducing the regulatory burden. This time, it seems this government's grand gesture to cut red tape only added up to between \$6.3 million and \$8.9 million in savings for the private sector, which, as I said, is burdened with over \$14 billion in red tape costs. So it's a drop in the bucket, to say the least. And that \$6.3 million to \$8.9 million, which is savings spread out over the entire Ontario private sector, doesn't even seem to be based on hard or reliable data.

There's nothing in this bill, Speaker, that is going to be prompting a sigh of relief from business owners. There are some overdue changes here, some proposals that I think people would have assumed were in place already, and quite a lot here that will have no impact on the private sector whatsoever.

That is a problem that has dogged these government red-tape bills. They're written primarily, it seems, to cut red tape for the government. I mentioned this the last time a red-tape bill came forward. It seems to cut red tape for the government, to ease their own costs or clean up their own legislation. They're dressed-up housekeeping bills with nice names like the Burden Reduction Act or Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. This bill does more to benefit government than private individuals and businesses.

I'm very supportive of the idea of regularly bringing forward red-tape-cutting bills, but it would be nice to see something in them that might have a real impact, a true impact, on businesses in the province. Bill 154 is, unfortunately, a pretty benign piece of legislation which mostly reads like a list of goals rather than a plan of action. They are goals that I support but which don't have the weight to them I would have liked to have seen.

There are, as the minister and his assistant explained, two parts to this bill. The first is the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, which consists of five new initiatives to be applied broadly. The second half is omnibus-style legislation that amends many existing acts. Today, I'm going to be focusing my comments on the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act portion of the bill.

I know there are a lot of proposed changes that affect the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, and OMAFRA among others, so I look forward to hearing some more in-depth analysis of those proposed changes from my colleagues as debate continues on this bill. There are some nice ideas in this bill but, frankly, they're not concrete. It's a lot of jargon and fluff, promises of making doing business here easier and more efficient, but not really committing to any of the initiatives they're talking about. It's like a list of New Year's resolutions: They're great objectives but they're essentially meaning-

less unless there is real commitment and follow-through, and there's no mechanism in this piece of legislation for ensuring that that follow through will be here.

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For example, in schedule 4 of the bill, we have measures around the electronic transmission of documents, allowing businesses to submit paperwork electronically instead of having to mail or hand-deliver it. This is something the government has been taking a very piecemeal approach to. We saw some specific allowances made in the last red-tape-reduction bill, for example. They're chipping away at it. Even within this bill, there's a specific commitment on enabling electronic service delivery and issuance of pesticide licences. But the broader related proposal in Bill 154, the government says, will make electronic document filing the default and then exceptions would be made on a case-by-case basis. Specifically, when a business is required, for any reason, to submit documents to a ministry of the government of Ontario in order to comply with the regulation, they may, at the option of the business, submit the documents electronically.

Personally, I would have thought that would already be the norm here in Ontario, that in this day and age this wouldn't be a measure a government would be introducing with fanfare. I think most people applying common sense would actually think the same. But even this step is not all it might appear to be because in fact this is basically just a suggestion to the ministries, and the government isn't able to say how broadly it might actually be applied. I understand that while this legislation is being considered, the Ministry of Economic Development is working concurrently with the other ministries of government to implement this, but they can't say how widely electronic document submission will actually be used.

Again, it's a nice thought, it's a sound thought, something I think most people would take for granted as already being in place, but I hope this will in fact be broadly applied and actually become the norm for the government of Ontario. It's a good measure, but we'll have to wait to see whether this proposal has any substantive impact.

Another measure that sounds good but is "aspirational," as the Premier might say, deals with national and international standards. The idea here is that government will be encouraged to consider harmonizing new regulations with national or international standards that are already in place instead of coming up with a unique made-in-Ontario standard, which absolutely makes sense. It's easier for our businesses to sell products to jurisdictions that have the same standards and requirements. It's easier for businesses to build or create products if they have more purchasing options and so on. That's what the Canadian Free Trade Agreement was about.

We absolutely need to get rid of these types of hindrances to business. They're often arbitrary and needless. But specifically, this bill says, "Where appropriate, recognized standards are to be adopted when developing or amending regulations." In practice, what this actually means is that when a cabinet committee is

looking at a new regulation, they will be given information about whether a proposed standard aligns with another recognized standard or if it is unique to the province of Ontario. The cabinet committee will have that information to consider when they evaluate the new regulation.

Again, I would have thought that this is something that would be in place already. It's frustrating to have to stand here and talk about this being a good idea because it's such a small step and so common sense and, on top of that, it has no teeth. In terms of harmonizing Ontario standards with other jurisdictions, this is the very bare minimum that could be done. I hope it has an impact. I hope the cabinet committees take this seriously, but once again we're really just left to hope. There's nothing concrete in here.

Along the same line, this bill proposes to reward business that have demonstrated solid regulatory compliance. The exact text reads, "Every ministry of the government of Ontario that administers regulatory programs shall develop a plan to recognize businesses that demonstrate excellent compliance with regulatory requirements." This is an idea with real potential. It would benefit both businesses and government, if businesses with an excellent compliance record were subject to fewer inspections, for instance—it would potentially mean fewer public and private resources being expended on red tape or, at the very least, that public resources could be more focused on non-compliant businesses. But the language of the bill that ministries should "recognize" businesses that demonstrate excellent compliance, is extremely vague. I understand there are too many programs and instances for the details of such recognition to be explicitly laid out, but it leaves businesses once again to just cross their fingers and hope that this will lead to something useful.

I want to make sure I address the small business component of this bill as well. The proposal on small business compliance reads as follows:

"4(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council and any other prescribed entity that makes or approves a regulation governed by this act that imposes requirements on businesses shall ensure that the regulation includes, where appropriate, less onerous compliance requirements to apply to small businesses.

"Same

"(2) Every minister responsible for the administration of a regulation governed by this act shall ensure that when the regulation is reviewed for any reason, a determination is made as to whether the regulation imposes requirements on businesses and, where appropriate, steps are taken to amend or replace the regulation in order to establish less onerous requirements to apply to small businesses."

Speaker, it hardly bears repeating, but this is a good idea that depends entirely on the government's follow-through. We all know the stats: This province has over 407,000 small businesses, and over 87% of people in Ontario are employed by small or medium-sized busi-

nesses. They are absolutely vital to our economy and our province's success.

These businesses simply don't have the resources to dedicate to compliance that larger corporations have. With the high cost of doing business in Ontario, many businesses are running as lean as they possibly can with a minimum of staff, so pulling a manager or business owner away from the regular work is a major imposition.

These businesses have different issues and different risks, and they have been particularly hard hit by this government as they struggle to bear the cost of electricity and are now bracing for a sudden minimum wage hike and the accompanying rise in CPP contributions and other costs. Speaker, they desperately need some relief.

I think they'll be pleased to hear that the government intends to start thinking about how regulations will impact small businesses and may perhaps consider making those regulations more reasonable for them, but this is just more wishing and hoping. These measures are not nearly enough, and there's no guarantee they will lead to anything at all.

As CFIB pointed out, the government has an approach to calculating the cost of red tape that they're happy to employ when they're reducing red tape, but we never get to see the figures on the overall cost of its rules. Responsible governance requires a consideration of costs versus benefits, and accountable governance requires that the public has some idea of how the government is spending their money. Too often, this is simply not the case here in Ontario.

This bill proposes a small measure of increased transparency by mandating that associated costs of new regulations will be published when a proposed regulatory requirement is posted to the regulatory registry. This is another case where most people probably assumed that the economic impact of a government proposal would exist and be available when that regulation is published for public comment, but somehow this is a brand new concept for this government. If there is one thing this government needs, it's more transparency.

I've long called on the ministry to become more transparent when it comes to handing out billions of dollars in corporate grants and I've been on the record demanding that this Liberal government release all corporate grant recipients going back to 2004. We're still continuing that fight, but I would urge the minister and his team to release all corporate grants in this province so people can see who got that money. Of course, one of the reasons is because we know, according to the Auditor General, that 80% of the money that was given to these corporations was done on an invitation-only basis, so bureaucrats or—bureaucrats, I hope, not politicians, were inviting companies to apply for corporate grants, and then, secondly, 96% of all that money given out to corporations went to the largest and most successful companies in Ontario. So we need transparency when it comes to corporate grants handed out by this government.

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Of course, on Thursday, thankfully, my private member's bill calling for transparency on cap-and-trade

pricing so everybody in the province can see a separate line item on their natural gas bills—I think, again, that is going to make governments of the day and future governments more accountable to the people of this province. We need more transparency and more accountability here at Queen’s Park.

But, Speaker, this just isn’t enough. I want to see Ontario being a leader again. Our economy has changed dramatically following the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. I’ve long said that this government has no real economic plan for our province. We’ve got soaring hydro rates and the looming spectre of increased CPP that are coming down the pipeline. We’ve got the cap-and-trade scheme. Businesses are finding a lot of disincentives to investing here in our province. The very least the government can do is to get out of the way and allow the innovation and hard work of the people of this province to actually fuel economic growth and the creation of new industries, companies, jobs, products and services.

On a personal note, coming from southwestern Ontario like a couple of my colleagues that are around me today from Perth–Wellington and Sarnia–Lambton, we’ve seen the devastation of over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs leaving the province. We need the government to get out of the way and reduce the regulatory burden and red tape even more.

This high level of bureaucratic intervention is made worse by the financial constraints that high debt and ongoing runaway spending are imposing. With inadequate resources to enforce and administer these hundreds of thousands of regulations, people and businesses are left waiting far longer than is reasonable for paperwork and approvals.

A case of nightmare bureaucracy I may have mentioned before: I heard from a very proactive company that was doing its best to be environmentally friendly. This manufacturer had its facility inspected by a ministry official and was told that there was good news and bad news. The good news was that there were no problems and they were impressed with the facility. The bad news was that the company would have to hire a consultant to the tune of \$60,000 to confirm that. Their exact words, I’m told, were, “You just have to pay the money and wait.” Then came the bracing revelation that the waiting could go on for quite some time, because it takes the government up to three years to review the consultant’s report—a true story, Mr. Speaker, right here in Ontario.

During all that time, companies are expected to freeze their operations so that the report remains accurate, which means no new machinery or processes are to be introduced. It’s ridiculous. What better method could be devised for stifling innovation? When the company raised this as an issue, they were told they should go ahead and make changes, but to hire a lawyer to deal with the issues this would create.

These are precious resources for companies already pushed to the brink. Why should these companies pay the price for this government’s redundancies and backlogs?

It’s another reason why I speak so often about this government needing to get its spending under control and get a handle on the provincial debt.

Carrying a high debt load comes with many liabilities. It limits a government’s ability to respond to an economic crisis. It defers investment and creates greater vulnerability to interest rate increases, and debt-servicing costs divert funding from very important programs. The repercussions of limited public resources are felt throughout the province, and the economic impact is amplified as it hinders private sector growth.

There is so much low-hanging fruit for this government to go after on red tape, and I can’t understand why it isn’t here. One example: The member for Leeds–Grenville introduced a private member’s bill a year ago, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016. The bill would have amended the Highway Traffic Act to allow registered motor vehicle dealers to use electronic means to apply for a permit, number plates or a validation for a vehicle, to apply for a new permit for a vehicle, or to apply for a used-vehicle information package. It would have allowed the Minister of Transportation to monitor the success of the program and add more services to the list through regulation. It passed second reading debate with unanimous support, but then died with prorogation. The bill would have helped Ontario’s 1,000 new car dealers save time and money and given them the tools to provide better customer service. Reintroduced as Bill 3, this bill is still sitting on the order paper.

I know that every member here has heard horror stories in their own ridings about red tape and the time it takes and the onerous costs it imposes, stories about entrepreneurs who are losing sleep over serious problems for their business, caused by obviously ridiculous government requirements. These are companies run by folks who love their communities, who care about their employees, who are struggling right now and are worried about their future because of this Liberal government. The provincial government has done so much in recent years to increase costs and create a chaotic regulatory environment. They need, at the very least, to have some of these hundreds of thousands of regulations peeled back. They need a stronger signal from government that their perspective is heard and actually, truly understood. This bill is not it. This is a get-well card, not a cure. We need more decisive action on the economic fundamentals, to create a competitive business environment here in Ontario.

Speaker, when I think about this Liberal government, I like to quote former President Reagan, who said, “Government’s view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.” I know that many of us, especially on this side of the House, know that quote quite well. I feel that that’s how this government here in Ontario manages the economy: They increase taxes; they’ve added billions of dollars of red tape; and, of course, we all know that they’re subsidizing

a lot of businesses out there but won't tell the people exactly which companies are getting the grants.

In the time I have left, I want to touch on just a few interesting newspaper stories that I came across in the short time I was preparing for this one-hour debate this afternoon.

This one is from May 4, 2016; it's a National Post piece by Philip Cross. It's called "When Bureaucrats Run Your Business." It's a great article just to highlight the intrusiveness of a bloated government:

"The growing intrusion of the provincial government into the economy does not stop at taxes and spending. In Ontario, especially, regulation has multiplied, which acts as a tax on consumers and producers because they have to spend resources to comply, even if the burden does not always add to the government's revenues.

"It is difficult to convey to people who live outside of Ontario the extent of regulation after over a decade of Liberal government. Statistically, by its own count there are over 380,000 regulations on the books, twice as many as the next province. Their cost extends beyond raising the expense to business owners of every employee, or filling in forms for the bureaucracy, to fundamentally disrupting the relationship businesses have with their customers.

"Regulations permeate everyday life in Ontario (except, apparently, when it comes to fundraising for political parties). I first began to keep note of their pervasiveness when visiting my tailor to get some alterations done. I thought it would be a simple matter to just drop off a suit. When I went to pass it to the tailor, he recoiled as if being handed something with bubonic plague, explaining that he could not touch clothes that had not been to the dry cleaners, with the tags still on them to prove their sanitary state.

"My barber recounts that the Ontario government is threatening to force all barbers to undergo training to obtain an occupational licence as a hair stylist." This is a second story. "Like most occupational licences, this one has nothing to do with his business and everything to do with government collecting \$140 in licensing fees. The market has always protected the consumer from barbers who either can't trim properly or lack a rapport with customers, by quickly driving them out of business.

"I made the mistake of asking my building superintendent and a tradesman what Ontario's stupidest regulations were. After talking my ear off for half an hour, they settled on the 'ladder law' that took effect last April. This requires anyone working with a ladder to take an online government course—at a \$29 fee, of course. The first lesson? Be sure to face the front of the ladder. Never would have thought of that myself.

"This is bureaucracy at its worst, a fixation on the process of complying with the letter of the regulation rather than achieving the desired result with the lowest compliance burden. My tailor would trust me not to pass him dirty clothes, and I trust him not to take them from me or anyone else; we hardly need tags to prove it. Regulating the details about firms conforming to regula-

tions is often offensive or even insulting to the customer. This hurts the relationship that businesses build with their clients, the very heart of small retail operations.

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Regulations are another example of how government bureaucrats will never understand business. The lifeblood of business is listening, a habit of imaginative engagement with customers and suppliers. The real cost to regulations is that they disrupt this communication between business and clients and suppliers. Instead, we have businesses forced to explain what the government requires instead of what is needed to please the client. And this goes on, Mr. Speaker.

The presumption is that people are actively trying to get around regulations to behave badly, and what white knight will save the human race from its darker side? The government, of course, staffed with people who supernaturally rise above the predatory instincts that hold sway over the great unwashed masses outside of government.

Regulation is supposed to provide evidence-based improvements to health, safety and the environment. Instead, as trade expert Michael Hart wrote in a 2012 paper for the C.D. Howe Institute, many are based on the irrational fears that serve little purpose other than to satiate the bureaucratic hunger for information or to accommodate what British blogger John Brignell calls the "march of the zealots."

"Businesses must be good at listening to survive. By contrast, Ontario's Wynne government turns a deaf ear to the growing complaints about the suffocating effect of regulation on business in the province. It seems appropriate that Ontario's official bird is the common loon; the out-of-control proliferation of regulation in Ontario is completely loony."

As I said, this was written by Philip Cross, who is a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. This was from May 4, 2016, in the National Post: "When Bureaucrats Run Your Business."

I've got a couple of really good examples too, one more local to me. This was an article in the London Free Press, May 11, 2016, so a while ago. It says, "Ontario Companies Challenged by Rising Energy Prices and ... Regulations." Speaker, it goes on to say, "Ontario manufacturing ... still faces big challenges, including a growing pile of government regulations.

"That was the consensus of a manufacturing round table held Wednesday in London and sponsored by the southwestern Ontario branch of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters."

We've all talked to many companies who are involved with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association. They've been to Queen's Park many times to meet with members of all parties.

This London Free Press article goes on to say, "The Ontario manufacturing sector has largely recovered from the 2008 recession, association vice-president Ian Howcroft said.

"During the 2008 recession the value of annual production fell to \$230 billion from \$300 billion 'almost

overnight,' he said. But since then it has recovered to \$290 billion annually.

"We have had a dramatic turnaround. We are almost back to where we were before the recession,' Howcroft said.

"Ontario manufacturers employ 750,000 people directly and support another 1.3 million jobs indirectly, he said.

"Manufacturers face a number of challenges including a shortage of skilled workers and rising electricity prices, Howcroft said. Ontario's new cap-and-trade program to limit greenhouse gases and the proposed Ontario pension plan also could put a financial burden on manufacturers, he warned.

"One subject that irks manufacturers is government regulation.

"Dave Shaw, an owner of Taurus Stampings in London, said auto part firms have to conform to 1,500 government regulations.

"The provincial government is asking business owners to take part in an online 'red tape challenge' to make suggestions to streamline regulations.

"The first phase launched March 31 and deals with comments on the parts sector.

"Shaw said he welcomed the opportunity but it took him three attempts to register on the website. When he got in, there were only five comments on the site, including his own, he said.

"When a businessperson fails once or twice to get on the" government "site—they don't have time to fool around. I suspect the government will say they have no problems with red tape because there were so few comments.'

"Peter Durant, a retired plant manager with 3M Canada, said there were positive things the government could do such as launching a 'patent box' program.

"Companies sometimes take industrial innovations developed in Canada and move them to other low-tax jurisdictions, he said.

"Giving a tax break to manufacturing products in Canada would really help.'

"The meeting also dealt with the potential impact of the upcoming" issues south of the border "to Canada's largest trading partner."

This was a really interesting article. Again, as I said at the beginning of the speech, we all speak to small business owners in our ridings about the burdens of red tape and government interference all the time.

I also want to bring forward another article that I found in the *Globe and Mail*, mostly because I like the title. This is from Tuesday, December 1, 2015. The title is, "A Guy Walks into a Bar and Smothers in Red Tape." This was written, I believe, by the president and CEO of Restaurants Canada. We'll see how this goes, Mr. Speaker.

"René Descartes walks into a bar. The bartender says, 'Can I get you a drink?' Descartes says, 'I think not,' and disappears.

"A guy walks into a bar' is one of the most popular ways to start a joke, but the reality of provincial liquor policies in Canada is no laughing matter. Archaic laws and restrictive regulations are pushing Canada's restaurateurs and bar owners to the limit.

"Every day, these policies restrict product selection, hinder good service and force small business owners to buy alcohol from a monopoly that is often their competitor.

"In every other industry, including food sales and manufacturing, companies that buy in volume are entitled to discounts, relative to customers who buy small quantities. But in the convoluted world of liquor regulations, business owners are charged the same as consumers when they buy alcohol in seven provinces, regardless of the amount they buy. And in one province—Ontario—bar and restaurant owners are charged more than consumers. A customer buying a case of Labatt Blue in Ontario pays about \$30"—this is in 2015 numbers—"a bar or restaurant owner would pay \$45 for the same case.

"It's time to change this. Bar and restaurant owners have to pass their costs along to customers, so a markup on the liquor they buy is eventually paid by the people who eat and drink in their establishments. Inflated prices ultimately drive those customers away. That outcome hurts the public, hurts restaurant and bar owners and even hurts the government, since a profitable food and beverage industry is an important part of a vibrant economy.

"It's also an important part of a vibrant community. Restaurants and bars have long been gathering places for people of all ages, stages for local musicians and destinations for tourists. And yet, many of these gathering spots are disappearing." I know we're all seeing that in our ridings. "Over the past 11 years, total revenue at bars and pubs has dropped 20%, representing a loss of \$548 million. Profit margins in the bar category are almost non-existent at just 3.2%"—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: They don't drink as much.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm sorry; I thought the member from Barrie wanted to add to the debate.

Speaker, I'll continue:

"Profit margins in the bar category are almost non-existent at just 3.2% and are not much better for restaurants at 4.1%. High costs and bureaucratic red tape are a big part of the equation.

"Liquor laws across Canada are a patchwork quilt of outdated policies. Small businesses are left grappling with regulations that make no sense now, if they ever did. Some of these include a prohibition in New Brunswick against restaurant customers standing while they consume alcohol"—that's new; I did not know that—"and a Prince Edward Island law that forbids swearing in a licensed establishment. It's a part of the greater supply management issue that exists in this country, and that keeps Canadian businesses from competing at their full potential.

"This spring, Restaurants Canada conducted a survey of licensees who represent 3,712 bar and restaurant businesses. We asked them what they thought about the

models they were operating under, and their answers came through loud and clear:

“—82% said their customers complain about the high cost of alcohol;

“—72% said the cost of beer, wine and spirits has a negative impact on their business;

—97% want to see wholesale pricing in their province.” Interesting stats there.

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This goes on to say, “We’ve released the results of this study in a new report, *Raise the Bar*, that grades the provinces on the bar- and restaurant-friendliness of their policies. Do they offer a wholesale rate to businesses that buy in bulk? Do they provide a wide range of products? Do they allow liquor to be purchased through a variety of outlets, rather than a single monopoly?”

“The results are striking. Alberta leads the way with a B-plus average, thanks to that province’s broad selection of alcohol products and wholesale pricing. Newfoundland brings up the rear with an F, because of a provincial monopoly that offers poor product variety, prohibits wholesale prices, stalls on issuing licences to new businesses, and conducts routine liquor inspections with inspectors wearing flak jackets. The other provinces fall somewhere in between.

“We aren’t asking for special privileges. We’re asking for the same kind of volume discounts that other business people receive on a standard basis, so we can pass them along to our customers. We’re asking for a wider and more interesting selection of alcohol products across the country. We’re asking for an easing of the archaic laws that smother business owners in red tape.

“Because, in the end, does the current system treat small business owners reasonably and does it allow us to offer the best possible experience to our customers? I think not.”

Again, Speaker, that’s not me saying that; this is the president and CEO of Restaurants Canada, who had this piece in the *Globe and Mail* on Tuesday, December 1, 2015, entitled, “A Guy Walks into a Bar ... and Smothers in Red Tape.”

I know we all have examples of red tape. I’ve cited a number of them, but I would like to highlight, as well, the ways other provinces in this country are addressing the issue of red tape and how this government should be following in their example of leadership.

For example, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business’ 2017 Red Tape Report Card of the provinces and federal government gave the Golden Scissors Award to the BC government for their continuing commitment to remove red tape. Examples of their efforts have included the creation of an annual Red Tape Reduction Day on March 2, 2016. Further efforts in British Columbia have included the repealing of 37 onerous pieces of legislation and the removal of 215 regulatory requirements. Now, that’s real change, and that’s real action on red tape. So in British Columbia, they repealed 37 pieces of legislation. I think that’s very commendable.

Further, the British Columbia government also established an innovative product of a permanent button on its website allowing anyone to easily submit ideas to cut red tape.

The Quebec government received, as well, mentions of distinction for their efforts on red tape reduction by instituting a “culture change” in government, with a recently adopted action plan on red tape, run by a permanent committee co-chaired by the Deputy Premier.

Further, the province enacted legally binding rules to measure their annual regulatory burden and a requirement that each department and agency is mandated to produce an action plan for red tape reduction.

In comparison, Ontario was ranked sixth in the national standings with the federal government and provinces like Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia ranked higher.

In the report, the CFIB even highlighted an example of time-wasting paperwork for individuals in Ontario who are looking to launch a winery. The report states that there are six permits from four different agencies an individual will need to fill out every two years, at a cost of \$1,260. There is another permit that will need to be submitted regarding the selling of your wine on your property, another for selling by the glass and another for serving food, which totals \$1,800.

Again, there’s obviously the financial cost, but time is also a cost. The entire process can take up to 12 weeks per permit and requires many official application forms, personal history reports, chemical-analysis fees, site plans and municipal information forms.

Further, the process can even become more onerous if you are interested in making specialty wines, such as the requirement to have a bee-keeping licence to make milled wine or the requirement that 70% of your apples be grown in Ontario, if you are making apple-based wines.

Other examples highlighted include the case of one Ontario winery owner who tried to obtain some craft spirits from a local distillery to sell at his restaurant, but because of regulations in place, he could not simply buy the product from the distillery, which is 10 minutes down the road. Due to the regulations that are currently in place, he had to, instead, have the product shipped to him from an LCBO warehouse, where it sat for months before it was sent to the restaurant, ironically, passing the same distillery it was shipped from.

In the report itself, the CFIB highlights that Ontario “has not evaluated the total regulatory burden recently and has no hard cap on volume or cost of rules in the system” when it comes to red tape reduction. Additionally, the report laments that Ontario is not tracking “any measures of the overall regulatory burden.” Further, the government continues to not track “the cost of additional rules coming into the system”—hopefully this bill is going to deal with some of this—“so it is impossible to say whether the total cost of complying with rules in Ontario has gone up or down.” The CFIB report concludes by calling on the Ontario government to “be

careful not to add additional burdensome rules through initiatives like the Changing Workplaces Review”—of course, we’re dealing with that now—“that could undermine its progress on burden reduction in other areas.”

So there’s a whole host of regulatory issues in the province. I give the government, the ministry team and the minister some credit for at least recognizing there is a problem with red tape in the province. But, again, as I said in the opening, this is going to deal with between \$6 million and \$8 million of regulatory costs, when the total cost to the economy is \$14 billion. This is truly a drop in the bucket.

I would encourage the government to look to—actually, it was the former Liberal government of British Columbia that did such a great job in reducing the regulatory burden there. They had the Deputy Premier co-chairing the committee that reduced red tape. I think they had a target of one third of regulations that they wanted reduced. Repealing 37 onerous pieces of legislation and the removal of 215 regulatory requirements: That’s a number that I think people can understand, and if you are a small business owner in the province, you would see first-hand that you had a government on your side.

Unfortunately, in Ontario, with \$14 billion in regulatory costs, high energy costs, this minimum wage increase happening in a matter of months, this cap-and-trade system—it just never ends for businesses. I would just caution the government to deal more substantially with the red tape burden in the province.

I look forward to more debate. We are just at the beginning. I look forward to what my colleagues on this side of the House are going to add to this debate. As the minister said, we’ll get this to committee. Hopefully, he means what he said, that he would take some advice from the opposition on this bill, to further help the small business community in the province of Ontario, because the small business community is under attack. It’s not just the Liberal government here in Ontario; we’ve got their cousins in Ottawa who are really attacking the family farm, farmers and the small business community with these tax grabs that they’re after.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That’s right—doctors.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes—the doctors and the medical community.

I mean, this is in their DNA, to tax and spend. At least, I would encourage them to get the regulatory side right.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to more debate on this.

1530

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There’s a lot of serious discussion taking place in the chamber this afternoon. I wouldn’t want in any way to diminish that, because there could be dire consequences in some areas if we cut red tape from certain legislation.

With that in mind, and because we have yet to create the position of a poet laureate for Ontario, allow me to make a point using less traditional means:

All this talk about cutting red tape sounds like it could be fun...

But only if you want to risk ending up with another Walkerton.

It would be awesome

If I could offer some words of caution.

Speaker, I anticipate there’s temptation...

Caused by a pent-up frustration...

That could lead to red-tape strangulation.

Not all red tape is bad or no-good...

So to Minister Brad Duguid...

Don’t allow your new bill’s creation...

To in any way diminish our health and safety regulations.

Minister, we may need a caped crusader...

To be our health and safety persuader...

If it’s good policy you wish to create...

Don’t cut any of the health and safety red tape.

Some of the debate may appear half-baked...

But this isn’t news that’s faked...

It’s simple logic you can’t escape...

Red tape has a place in this nation

When it comes to health and safety regulations.

Now, in all likelihood

My words will be misunderstood...

But either listen to me

Or risk a huge increase in claims filed at the WSIB.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to start off by thanking the members opposite for their comments this afternoon, especially the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I know that there was a lot to unpack from that bill. Thank you for your one-hour-long comments. I’m happy to hear that you’re actually supportive of many of the efforts that our government is making as it relates to transparency and moving towards electronic records. We all know how life will be so much simpler and easier once we’re there with all of that.

You did make a comment and refer to perhaps the lack of transparency in business supports. I just want to make sure that the member opposite is clear in his comments around transparency in business supports.

We are absolutely transparent, Mr. Speaker, in who receives grants from the province of Ontario. Actually, the most recent portion of open data was just released this past September 11. I see the member nodding, so I’m sure he’s quite aware that this is exactly what happened, unlike the comments he made in his leadoff. This trans-

parency builds on our other releases on September 21, 2016, and February 15, 2017.

He also referred to Ontario becoming less competitive. Mr. Speaker, I know that in my role as parliamentary assistant, I get to meet a lot of up-and-coming companies, emerging companies, here in our province. Let me tell you, many of these have been in the US before; many of them have been down in Silicon Valley, and they say to me, “Cristina, this is where we want to be. We want to be in Ontario, because this is where the competitiveness is. This is where we are cutting-edge in the emerging IT sector, and this is where we want to be: in Ontario.”

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It’s a pleasure to join in the debate from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

During the minister’s debate, he said he was looking for further ideas. Well, I’ll pass on a few here.

In my riding, there’s a lady named Theresa Scott. She suffered a medical condition that required her to get an assistive mobility device. However, if she went out and bought the device first, without government approval, her claim for compensation would be rejected, and was rejected. The government red tape or regulatory process for assistive devices is that you must wait for the approval before you make the claim for compensation, or before you purchase. That is a minimum of eight weeks. So, to my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh, is that “public safety” necessary, when we prevent somebody from having a quality of life for a bureaucratic approval, where you actually go out and say, “No, you can’t get that walker, you can’t get that assistive mobility device, until the government approves it”?

I could go on with many others. How about the Health Care Connect program, where, if you have a doctor, you cannot get on the Health Care Connect program, and so if your doctor is known to be retiring, you can’t actively go out and find a new doctor until you actually don’t have that doctor, until he is retired?

And there are many. How about getting a referral to a specialist? You need to get that from your family physician. However, if you don’t have a family physician, you cannot get the referral to the specialist.

Those are examples of regulatory burdens which are not beneficial. They are not improving health or safety. They are just causing grief and anxiety. They are red tape, and all red tape—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to stand in the House, and today to speak on Bill 154, cutting unnecessary red tape.

I listened closely to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and I agreed with many of his points—not all. Red tape is a balancing act. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh very eloquently mentioned Walkerton, and

that’s an example of gross negligence regarding regulation.

We are protected by regulation. But when regulation goes into the realm of red tape—and there are legitimate problems with red tape. I give you an example of a small abattoir that needs “his” and “hers” washrooms for a mom-and-pop abattoir. That is a regulation that does not make meat any safer. Actually, when that abattoir closes because of those excess regulations, it makes meat less safe because the abattoir process still goes on, but it goes on behind the barn without any regulation. So there is an example. But we do need regulations—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: To the member: I wish you would quit commenting while I’m speaking.

There is a fine balance, and we’ve all run into this. I’ve run into it in my riding, where some vendors are allowed to sell at a farmers’ market, but the very same vendor with the very same food was not allowed to sell at the community market. That is a regulation that is red tape. We got that fixed. My comment was, “So is it okay to poison the good people of New Liskeard but not the good people of Temagami?” And then they’ll say, “Well, no. The food is perfectly safe.” “Then why can’t they sell it in Temagami?” And that was fixed.

That is an example of regulation where it borders on red tape. But we are protected by regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’d like to thank my good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh, the PA from Davenport, my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and also the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who actually spoke to my private member’s bill the other day, so I’m glad to have him agreeing with what was said over the last hour.

Look, I’ve been up many times in this House as a small business owner myself prior to coming into politics and up until, actually, about a year ago. Red tape is a big problem. Overregulation, the intrusiveness and the growth of government, has a negative impact on the small business community in the province of Ontario. We need those small and medium-sized companies to grow, to become exporters and to continue to develop innovative products, but we need to get government out of the way.

I commend the government for sort of having this nice bill with this nice title, but again, this is going to save \$6 million to \$8 million in regulatory costs for businesses, and I would think part of that will be in government costs too. But the fact is, we’ve got a \$14-billion cost for the private sector in Ontario, and the growth, as I stated, has gone up billions of dollars over the last number of years because the size of, and cost to, government has grown in this province.

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I would encourage the government to look at other jurisdictions in Canada. The BC model is the one that I

held up today, where they got the rid of over 30 pieces of onerous legislation and a couple of hundred regulatory requirements. I think that would be in the best interest of the small business people and consumers in Ontario.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I think it is rare that the three parties all have their one-hour leads on a piece of legislation, and it's a big piece of legislation, which is very fitting because it's red tape, right? It's cutting unnecessary red tape, which also implies that there is necessary red tape, I might add.

I also want to thank the good staff at the Ministry of Economic Development for the red power tube here, just so all the information is contained on it. I thought the symbolism was good. Somebody has a sense of humour, I hope, in the ministry.

It's interesting to listen to all the different perspectives on how the respective parties view regulation, and regulatory burdens, in some instances. The minister, Minister Duguid, started off his one-hour lead, sharing with the member from Davenport, with some sports analogies around "taking a knee" and comparing himself to Leonardo DiCaprio, which I also found to be fairly amusing, as did most people in the chamber, I think, to be fair. To that end, though, I'm going to intersperse one of my favourite performers and songwriters, the amazing Gord Downie, who many of you know is suffering from a terminal brain tumor. He has informed a lot of the Canadiana culture that we appreciate in this country. To that end, a quote from Wheat Kings: "No one's interested in something you didn't do." When the minister compares himself to Leonardo DiCaprio, I have to say that their records are—I think we have this version of looking at the history of what we've actually accomplished versus what we actually have done.

Because this is such a big piece of legislation—it's another omnibus piece of legislation—I think it's important to look at the context and the history as to how we got to this place in the history of this province. You certainly will remember, Speaker, because you were here, that the Red Tape Commission was a Canadian body created by the Progressive Conservative government in Ontario in 1996 to deal with the 1995 election commitment to reduce red tape, which they regard as excessive bureaucracy and regulation. I think that this is where you'll find a little bit of a difference of opinion, because we have strong opinions, as New Democrats, around regulation, especially as it pertains to worker health and safety. But when this commission was started, the original idea was that it was for small businesses and individuals, and to promote business planning within the broader public sector. It consisted of seven Progressive Conservative members of provincial Parliament at the time, six staff members drawn from the Ontario civil service, and they did some annual reviews of all regulations administered by every ministry of the government.

I think you could actively say that there was some damage caused, particularly around food and safety

regulation during those years, by removing meat inspectors, for instance. My good friend and colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh also mentioned Walkerton. It is disturbing to hear some of the members' say, "Well, those two fellows had drinking problems and that affected the water quality." You have to remember: Seven people died in Walkerton, if my memory serves me right, and regardless of whether or not they were consuming alcohol, there were no checks and balances, there were no safety measures in place to ensure that quality was ensured. At the end of the day, what is more important than the health and safety of the citizens that we serve, and the quality standards that we all aim to hold true to?

Also, this original Red Tape Commission was supposed to be a temporary body. The commission was reconstituted in 2000 as a permanent body, and it was chaired by a number of Conservatives of the day. But in December 2003, the newly elected Liberal government discontinued the commission. So we have come full circle, if you will, Mr. Speaker.

I was also interested to hear how the minister saw the economy right now in the province of Ontario, because, as he mentioned, his respective critics—we meet with businesses all the time. We hear their complaints. We were elected, in this instance, to hold the government to account for some of the promises that they have made to reduce the regulatory burdens in this province.

Almost every business, but particularly small businesses, who are the job creators in the province of Ontario, with almost 80% of employees in small businesses—the call to streamline and the call to address the chaos of the regulatory framework is real. I'm going to give you some examples, and I'm going to propose some solutions, as I have been asked to do.

You have to know the environment that you're working in. Business confidence is suppressed in the province of Ontario. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's recently released report, Ontario has a business confidence issue. Only 25% of the businesses surveyed are confident in Ontario's economic outlook, while 64% are confident in their own organization's outlook. That tells you that they feel like they're doing everything that they can. They have confidence in the people that they have in their businesses. They have confidence in their ideas and in their innovation. But clearly, only 25% of the businesses are confident that the government is either a willing partner or willing to reduce some of the barriers that exist right now in Ontario.

They say that the top threats to Ontario businesses are the increasing input costs, especially the cost of electricity. There isn't an MPP in this Legislature who has not heard directly from businesses around the cost of electricity and the deterrent that those increased costs are to investment in Ontario. The cost of electricity is impacting the retention of employees, the hiring of employees, and the productivity within those businesses.

Much of this goes back to the political interference in the energy ministry, and also the privatization of energy

in the province of Ontario. With the broadening of the ownership, as the Premier likes to describe it, the largest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector happened in this province under the Liberals' watch. That is going to cost Ontarians hundreds of billions of dollars over the years. To date, the Auditor General, in her 2016 report, cited that we have already overspent on green energy to the tune of \$37 billion, because those contracts were negotiated at such a high cost.

So when businesses cite the high cost of electricity and the impact of high energy costs on their businesses, they look to this government directly as impacting those costs.

I think we all agree that we cannot have Ontario seen as a place that's risky to do business, and I think that we can do much better for the people of this province.

We do have many advantages in this province. We have world-class educational institutions, which are also somewhat being affected by privatization. We have a somewhat stable political and legal system. We had, at one point, one of the strongest health care systems in Canada, which also has been negatively impacted by privatization. And we have a diverse workforce and preferential access to some of the world's largest markets. Still, within that entire lexicon of the economy, businesses cite our own government as negatively impacting their ability to navigate, really, through the regulatory framework.

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As you move through this act, you actually see, through every schedule—some of it is frustrating because it's kind of boring. If you look at one of these issues, schedule 3 repeals the Employers and Employees Act and amends the Co-operative Corporations Act. That's it. Schedule 5, the Ministry of the Environment: It replaces the definition of "minister" and "ministry." As you move through the acts—there are a couple of problems for us, that we have some questions for the government on.

Then you get to places like the schedule that addresses the Local Health System Integration Act. This basically says technical French and accessibility amendments under this part—it just replaces a chart with a clearer chart. So sometimes you scratch the surface and you get a little more surface.

I think what people would like to see when they see pieces of legislation which are looking to streamline and update and modernize—certainly, the Local Health System Integration Act. When you look at all of the services in our health care system that have been now contracted out, and you lose the accountability and the transparency and, quite honestly, the ownership of delivering those services—and my colleague was referencing a constituent in his riding, where services were not delivered. There are so many people who come into my office in Waterloo who are fighting just to see a level of care from our local LHIN—and to their credit, the LHIN came and met with me, because I've been documenting and working with the liaison officers on a lot of this, and it is probably the most complex bureaucracy that this

government has ever owned, or broadened the ownership of.

When you talk to the LHIN, there are good people who work there, obviously. When they've contracted out, though, to those third-party contractors, the care partners, if you will—and I asked them, "Why can you not ensure that those third-party contractors are actually delivering the services that you've contracted them to do?" They said that sometimes they have a carrot and sometimes they have a stick, but they have no true ownership over the quality of the services.

An elderly lady was supposed to receive 90 hours a month of PSW care. The level of care that she is getting directly impacts the quality of her life. The LHIN could not make sure that CarePartners, which is making profit by doing this work, were doing the work that they were contracted to do. So when you have these agencies that are in the middle—and their goal is to make money, because they are businesses. The Auditor General, to her credit, also found that bureaucracy and administration and a profit agenda were eating away at the health care budget.

I think my point in addressing the Local Health System Integration Act is that you can tinker around the edges around the health care system but there are substantive changes that need to happen.

Just to sort of recap, though, around Bill 154: There is potential here to recognize and be respectful of the voices of small businesses who have come forward and said, "You are making life too difficult. These regulations do not make sense." To be truly consultative in that regard is to be respectful of those voices and to see the changes reflected in the legislation. To date, we have not seen this.

I think my colleague mentioned that 37 onerous pieces of legislation are dealt with here.

I think that the context is also important. For some reason, this government has decided to wake up and say, "Okay, do you know what? After 14 years, we're going to look at the red tape. We're going to look at these regulations, and we're going to go through the motions and try to determine what can make a difference." But this cannot be done when you amend—it's actually 40 different pieces of legislation in a single omnibus bill.

The last time the Liberal government presented a bill like this, it was the Burden Reduction Act, which tried to privatize Ontario Place lands. There are still many outstanding questions about that piece of legislation. After a move like that, and with the government willing to profit off of shared public goods, it's reasonable to be wary of pieces of legislation as large as this.

It begs the question: Why did it take so long to table these amendments?

Much of the bill talks about allowing electronic delivery of services. It's 2017. If you tour your local hospital and you ask them how the eHealth experiment is going, they will tell you, quite honestly, that there are serious gaps after \$8 billion. When eHealth was first started—I believe this actually caused the resignation of

a minister at the time. The mismanagement of the electronic files within our health care system is truly embarrassing. That you can go to a doctor and those files cannot be shared, that the privacy agreements have not been worked out, that the computer systems are incompatible, and yet many of the amendments contained within Bill 154 have to deal with allowing electronic delivery of services—my point is that it's nothing, really, to brag about.

Many of these regulatory reforms should have been done long ago. We need a government that is responsive to our changing society and economy.

We have some genuine questions, and I hope that the parliamentary assistant can address some of these. Will these amendments reduce the cost of doing business for Ontario businesses while maintaining the public interest? That's the tension point, I think, around regulations in some instances. Are these regulatory changes enough? Do they go far enough? Is there room to improve? Is there room to take it one step further?

As I've already mentioned, the cost of doing business for Ontario continues to rise. Since 2006, as I mentioned, electricity is a major driver. Off-peak electricity prices have increased by 150%, and according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's most recent annual report, this still is a major factor.

So we see these changes and some of them, obviously, we have concerns about. But in many respects, it's a bit of a missed opportunity to take one step further.

I think this is the tension that we bring to this debate—that we need to find the balance between regulations that are cumbersome and frustrating and deter investment and the regulations that are necessary.

We also have the very real issue in this province of some regulations, particularly around health and safety, not being met.

I would like to just give a quick shout-out to Toronto Star journalists Sara Mojtahedzadeh and Brendan Kennedy, who did the exposé called “Undercover in Temp Nation.” If we're going to be talking about how regulatory burdens are monitored in the province of Ontario, if they're upheld, we have to talk about enforcement. This particular story stuck with me because it incorporates many of the amendments that are contained within Bill 154.

I'll just remind the Legislature about what “Undercover in Temp Nation” was about:

“Amina Diaby died last year in an accident inside one of the GTA's largest industrial bakeries where, the company says, worker safety is its highest concern.” This was a 23-year-old woman. She “was one of thousands of Ontarians who have turned to temporary employment agencies to find jobs that often come with low pay and little training for sometimes dangerous work.”

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I raised the food processing because this was part of the consultation process that the minister had raised. He said, “We have looked at the food-processing industry and we've looked at those regulations.” He specifically

mentioned good compliance records. Well, for this company, I'll just say: On her first day—it was at Fiera Foods, which is an industrial bakery—she said it was reeking “of yeast and is alive with the constant drone of machinery” and that they were “forming and packing raw, circular pastry.” It's important because this company does not have a good safety record. The journalist who came into the factory described that pace of the work as “crushing.” This company “has also received some \$4.7 million in government loans and grants to expand capacity and create good jobs. The company says all employees are given ‘in-depth training’ and that Fiera has invested half a million dollars in health-and-safety initiatives over the past ... years.”

Well, what we learned when this journalist went undercover is that this is completely untrue. In total, this particular temp worker got five minutes of training to work on major industrial equipment. She's “paid in cash with no deductions or pay stubs.” She picks up her paycheque “from a payday lender, a 35-minute bus ride from the factory.”

It's important to state that “Fiera has been slapped with 191 orders for health and safety violations over the past two decades, for everything from lack of proper guarding on machines to unsafely stored gas cylinders.”

At least a dozen of the women who were just working on the one line with this one journalist were hired through temp agencies: “Temp agency workers are changing the face of labour in Ontario.”

So if you want to talk about where we need stronger regulations, if you want to talk about where we need enforced regulations, it would be in a company like this, a company that received government money—\$4.7 million is not a small amount of money.

She goes on to say:

“In workplaces around the province, the use of temp agencies limits companies' liability for accidents on the job, reduces their responsibility for employees' rights, and cuts costs....”

“In August, charges were laid against Fiera Foods under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for the 2016 death of” the temp agency worker I mentioned.

But this is a huge loophole. This is where you would need a regulatory sanction to ensure that workers are safe, to ensure that a third-party payday lender doesn't pay workers in cash.

I have to say, this piece is not just about this one company. The author writes, “Fiera is far from alone in its reliance on agencies. Over the past decade, the number of temp agency offices opening across Ontario has increased by 20%, with some 1,700 operating in the GTA alone...”

It's important for this House to know that temp agencies have increased 20% in Ontario over the past decade. So this is okay? Is this the kind of economy that this government wants to create?

When I go through a piece of legislation like Bill 154, I think it's important for me, as a member of provincial Parliament, to learn and to be educated about the reality

of workers in the province of Ontario and to determine the role of regulations and legislation on those workers and those working conditions.

But I think it's important for the House to learn that temp agencies like this—the 20% increase—“make their money by placing workers at companies at an agreed-upon rate, billing the client for temps' wages, plus a markup for themselves....

“Temp agency employees are some of the most ‘vulnerable and precariously employed of all workers’....

“Temps can be terminated at a moment's notice.... Companies who use them are liable along with their temp agency for unpaid wages, including overtime and vacation pay, but not for most other workplace rights.”

So if you want to talk about improving the world of work for the citizens of this province, this is a major gap in that.

She goes on to talk about some of the working conditions. I think that people should know that, as it relates to the WSIB, “While temp agencies are traditionally associated with casual office work, stats from the WSIB”—she had to FOI this information—“show the majority of temps are now being placed in other sectors, including non-clerical, construction, restaurant and driving jobs.

“The Star also asked the WSIB for injury data filed by non-clerical temp agencies—those operating in sectors like manufacturing, warehouse and health care—and comparable workplaces. The statistics show non-clerical temps were more than twice as likely to get hurt on the job in 2016” as non-temps.

Even when they get hurt, though, even when these people, who are vulnerable, who are precariously employed, get hurt in the workplace, they don't file compensation claims because they are afraid of losing their jobs.

I raise this as an example, with this particular company and the deaths now of three workers at this company—this company that has received government money—to point to the fact that there are regulations that are needed to be enforced, that are needed to be monitored. I think that's an important piece to bring to this debate.

There are good ideas that are out there. In our last platform, we had the job creation tax credit, which gave a tax credit amount to a small business when they hired somebody. One of the big issues in the province of Ontario is youth actually getting in the door, having that experience. We wanted to partner with employers across this province by saying, “If you're going to hire someone, we're going to reward you with a tax credit.” That idea was received very well by small and medium-sized employers across Ontario. We also proposed a reduction in the small business tax.

You have schedule 4, which will be really interesting. Schedule 4, just for those who are interested, is the Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act. Obviously, this is one of the more substantial parts of the bill.

One area of concern is that this act requires that ministries, when appropriate, use less onerous regulatory requirements for small businesses and adopt nationally/internationally recognized standards when developing or amending legislation.

These two things, just as an FYI, are sometimes incompatible. Many small businesses do not have the capacity to meet international standards because they are not international companies. They are Ontario companies providing services in the province only.

I have a direct example to highlight this piece. This summer, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of IT consultants who were concerned about losing their contracts with the provincial government because of an update to international standards. I would like to get their story on the record, because this is a disconnect with this government, a tangible disconnect between the reality that small business owners face and their interaction with this government.

On May 25, 2017, the Ontario government proposed changes to the vendor of record—the VOR—qualifications for I&IT services. You'll remember that these changes came about as a response to the Auditor General's 2016 report, chapter 3, section 3.13. The AG had recommended several changes to Supply Chain Ontario and their procurement practices. The list of vendors of record in the IT service category is set to decrease. This is important: It's set to decrease from 316 vendors to 10. According to Minister MacCharles, the drastic reduction of vendors is a result of how her senior advisers interpreted the recommendations in the AG's report.

New qualification criteria are going to be quite challenging for small and medium-sized enterprises to meet. Just to give you a benchmark, bidders must generate revenue of at least \$25 million. Bidders must provide three reference clients where they provided a minimum of 250 on-demand IT resources each within a 12-month period. Reference contracts must be for a duration greater than 12 months.

What essentially is happening here is that the government consulted with 10 of the largest IT providers to the government of Ontario and determined that all of that work was going to then go to those 10 vendors, who are then probably going to subcontract out to the other 316 vendors.

That's not instilling confidence in a relationship with the business community from the government's side of the House. This is generally seen as a huge betrayal of the work that has actually happened here.

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When I met with the group in the summer, they explained their genuine concerns to me. At the beginning of my talk, I spoke about the government's effort to ensure best practices when it came to our regulatory environment. This is an example of a lack of consultation with businesses. In this case, it was not done, and this change cannot be seen as a demonstration of best practices. Indeed, one of the core principles of procurement—supplier access—was completely ignored in this case.

Supplier access is supposed to guarantee that suppliers are treated fairly and equally, and have open access to compete for government businesses. In this case and with the international standards, suppliers were unfairly disadvantaged to their size. So you have a government, once again, picking winners and losers and, in this instance, favouring larger IT providers, who in turn are probably going to subcontract out to the smaller providers. That doesn't address the core concerns of the Auditor General.

I did write to the minister about this and I raised these concerns. Quite honestly, New Democrats have a huge concern of 316 IT businesses going out of business. I asked her to review the renewal program and the process and consult properly with small and medium-sized IT businesses before proceeding further. I did, of course, mention that, "In the report, both your ministry and the Treasury Board Secretariat agreed with the AG's recommendations to make the procurement process more competitive, efficient and effective. In reality," the Minister of Government and Consumer Services' "proposed solution limits the number of eligible VORs, making the process less effective and less competitive."

You have a very large piece of legislation, an omnibus piece of legislation, with the stated goal from the minister and the parliamentary assistant saying, "We want to work with business, we want to consult with them, we want to honour that consultation," and then you have action—you have action that actually is going to hurt small businesses.

I made it a point of saying, "While I agree with the AG that in order to maximize government savings, more IT services should be provided by in-house workers, "I also believe that the solution to problems in the IT procurement sector are not found in the exclusion of small and medium-sized IT companies from the bid process."

I go on to say, "It is astonishing that" this is the government's response to the AG report "by effectively firing over 300 small and medium-sized IT businesses by establishing a VOR criteria that shut out all but the ... largest IT firms." So much for supporting small businesses in the province of Ontario.

I did receive a response saying—not much, actually. She says, "The draft model was informed by a number of factors" including the AG, "as well as key findings from extensive consultation and research into the public and private sector best practices for the provision of IT services."

When this government starts talking about best practices and essentially public-private partnerships, we lose faith almost immediately. You'll remember that the Auditor General found that public-private infrastructure projects in the province of Ontario—that we had effectively paid \$8 billion more in those contracts. Under the guise of risk transfer, this government decided to spend up to 28% more than they actually needed to on those infrastructure projects, which, I may remind you, reduces the investment that you have for infrastructure on a go-forward position, compromises the confidence that

Ontarians have in our infrastructure projects and, to add insult to injury, the last three budgets that this government has tabled in this House promised infrastructure investments, and every single year, this government underspent by almost \$3 billion. All this was in the context of, "We need to sell off Hydro One to fund infrastructure."

So you will excuse us, respectfully, for having serious confidence issues in a government that says they want to reduce red tape, address regulatory burdens and streamline the process, but then at the same time turns around and tangibly, with action, reduces the ability for small and medium-sized businesses to bid on work that actually happens here in the province of Ontario. We have some concerns, certainly, about that disconnect.

There are some amendments to schedule 6, similar amendments to various corporate acts, that were a little concerning to us. This actually goes to the point around this particular schedule, which makes amendments of an administrative nature to the following acts: the Business Corporations Act, the Corporations Information Act, the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act and the Limited Partnerships Act. Within this schedule, there is a worrying amendment:

"The minister or a person designated by the minister receives the power to enter into agreements authorizing a person or entity to provide business filing services on behalf of the crown, the government, the minister, the director or registrar, as applicable, or other government official."

This allows the minister, or an individual designated by the minister, to sign off on business deals that the government is making. This is a genuine question: Who would these individuals be? Who are these designates who can sign off on these agreements? At first glance, this appears to be setting the stage to streamline the outsourcing of more government services.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Oh, say it ain't so.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know: Say it ain't so.

It raises concerns, because this government has a terrible track record, a shameful track record, on the outsourcing of government services, from Ontario Works to the contracting out of lab services in our hospitals; the privatization of our energy sector; the contracting out of services for our most vulnerable disabled adults in the province of Ontario to corporate caregivers; the embracing of the corporatization of child care and early learning, which is actually traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange in the province of Ontario.

This is definitely a concern. I have heard time and time again from constituents in Kitchener-Waterloo that privatized public services do not meet their standards. The people in this province are not satisfied with the level of services when they are privatized, whether it's the long list of user fees at the Serco DriveTest centres or the sell-off of Hydro One. The constituents in this province—in my riding, in particular—are frustrated that the government's services are no longer being provided by the government, that there is that lack of accountability, of direct ownership of those services.

I get complaints in my constituency office quite frequently regarding the poor-quality services at some of these agencies. Constituents have come to my office to vent their frustrations, and they feel frustrated because they come to the government and the government says, “No, I’ve contracted that out. That’s that other agency’s job.” But the responsibility still falls to this government.

In many respects, especially for seniors—I think that they’re very vocal in this regard—they see that this government has abdicated their responsibility, particularly on health care, to other arm’s-length agencies, with the goal of saying, “Oh, I can’t directly address that, because that is that agency’s responsibility.” What we’ve seen with the third-party deliverers of personal support workers is that there’s a lack of direction; there’s a lack of accountability; there’s a lack of ownership in that regard, and that is not going to be fixed by absorbing the CCACs into the LHINs and creating sub-LHINs. That will only be fixed when a new government is elected and says to the people of this province, “We are going to ensure that you do get those 30 hours of personal support worker time every week, because we are directly responsible for it. We’re not going to abdicate our responsibility to the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario. We’re not going to let a company gather profit over the services that we’ve contracted them to do. We’re going to remove the profit agenda from the health care file, so that we can actually have the funding to ensure that people don’t”—like the poor woman in my riding who had to stay in a bed for 17 hours because no personal support worker came to address her. It’s those kinds of privatization stories that concern me.

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And language matters; I say it often in this House. When I have constituents who can’t afford to take a driver’s test so that they can drive to and from work or drop their kids off at school or daycare, that is a problem. So when we have legislation that appears to open the door to more private business involvement and government, I justifiably get concerned.

The sell-off of Hydro One is a perfect example of how the privatization of government services does not provide the benefits to the people of this province. As I said, it is the largest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector in the history of this province, although I must say, once we fully analyse the energy file in Ontario and we reflect back on some of the decisions this government made, I’m sure we’re going to see larger numbers, especially with this new scheme of reducing hydro by a so-called 25% reduction.

I will get to schedule 9, the Arthur Wishart Act. The history on this, because context does matter, is that this piece of legislation was originally put forward by MPP Tony Martin back in 2000. The bill was designed to set new ground rules for the often tense relationships between franchise chains and the entrepreneurs who invest in their outlets. This was a new learning opportunity for me, I must tell you, but the NDP is always proud to stand on the side of franchise owners and ensure that

small business owners have all the tools that they need to succeed. I still have some questions about these amendments and how they will benefit small business owners, and I hope the minister will be able to clarify that as soon as possible. But there does appear to be an amendment, under the guise of cutting red tape, which seems to be giving more protections to the large franchise owners, creating a power imbalance and definitely a lack of transparency with the smaller franchises.

When this originally happened in 2000—this article is actually called “Working Life: The Struggle for Franchise Law Ends in Compromise.” This was the last time that the franchise legislation was attempted to be revised in this House—and some people were here.

This is from March 30, 2017, and says, “Ontario legislation comes into force this fall that sets new ground rules for the often tense relations between franchise chains and the entrepreneurs who invest in their outlets.

“The law, approved last month by the province’s Legislature, turned out to be weaker than many franchise advocates would have liked.

“But it will still have a significant impact. More than one third of the estimated 1,300 Canadian franchisors are based in Ontario....

“Other provinces—notably British Columbia—are known to be waiting for Ontario’s law and will probably enact similar”—now they’ve made a stronger piece of legislation to protect soon-to-be franchise owners.

“The law, which was passed after a last-minute deal had been forged in committee, brings to a close a 29-year-old effort to regulate the sector.” It shouldn’t take 29 years to bring a regulation in to create some clarity for someone who wants to buy a franchise.

“It sets basic rules for franchisor behaviour.

“It forces those who sell those who sell franchises in Ontario to disclose basic information to new franchisees at least two weeks before the agreement is signed....

“It prohibits franchisors from punishing members of their systems who participate in franchisee associations.

“It imposes on both parties ‘a duty of fair dealing’....”

But at the time, even back in 2000, Mr. Speaker, “as some franchise lawyers and industry insiders have pointed out, these basic requirements address only the sector’s bottom-feeders—those who” were in this sort of arena, this sector, who were actually disrespectful to the people who were buying franchises.

In committee, NDP MPP Tony Martin” at the time “had pressed hard for legislation that would also regulate numerous details of the franchise relationship, such as territorial encroachment, renewals and dispute resolution. But government members” at the time “believed such an approach would unnecessarily intrude on business contracts, namely franchise agreements.”

It’s interesting that they had this opportunity to regulate these franchise agreements in order to make the system more fair, but that’s when the Conservatives were in power, and they chose not to truly regulate this field. They chose to inform, not regulate.

We have an interesting history here in the province of Ontario on addressing regulations and regulatory

burdens. You have areas like safety, where the regulations should be strong; they should be enforced. Workers should be protected, as in the example that I gave to you with regard to Fiera, this company in the GTA.

You have opportunities where you have legislation that you can make stronger, clearer and more transparent for businesses in the province of Ontario. When there is clarity, most businesses would say, “Okay, at least I know the rules of engagement.”

When you look at what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has said around trying to connect the priorities and the content of this bill, and to bring the voices of small businesses into the debate, and the stresses they feel under the current government, this bill does fall short. It does not address the red tape.

We should define what that is. “Red tape” is those regulations that clearly do not make sense. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane referenced that: Why can a farmer sell his produce in one market down the street, and then not in another one not that far away, if it’s considered safe to do so?

In the 2017 pre-budget consultations, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce had identified four priorities. They said they wanted to demonstrate fiscal prudence and sound budget management; they wanted to address the infrastructure deficit; and they wanted to foster conditions for increased business competitiveness.

The most common and acute concern of the small business community in Ontario are those rising input costs. When you look at this piece of legislation, as my colleague had said, there’s about \$6 million to \$8 million in savings through these amendments. In a budget the size of Ontario’s, it really is a very small amount. I think the business community, and genuinely so, is so desperate for some signal from this government that they’re willing to come to the table, that they are embracing the consultation process. But, really, in the vast scene of the economy of the province of Ontario, \$6 million to \$8 million is not a lot of money.

I think that’s a missed opportunity. Even when this piece of legislation gets to the committee—we have seen this government not be very receptive to some of the ideas that we have brought forward. Many of these people, many of these companies and these businesses, have been coming to this government for a long time. Having gone through the finance committee process many times now—I’d look at a company, or an organization like Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization, where they’re using the same language as the government is right now. I share in that language, but the action piece is very different than the stated goals, and I’ve already given two examples.

OBIO says, “The global drive to build knowledge economies has probably never been stronger and regional governments are designing ever more programs and policies to compete for talent, investment and the economic and social benefits that come with success.”

Also, “two major roles for tax policy in alleviating part of this challenge,” like “attracting investment into Canada’s health science companies.”

One of the reasons that I’m so passionate about bringing the voices of OBIO to this Legislature is that these are companies who will also improve the health care system. These are companies where they have received some start-up research money. They have developed amazing ideas. I know that the stand-in Speaker right now has attended some of these meetings. These are good companies. Their goal is to improve the health care system. We’ve made some initial research funding available to them, although that process is still very complicated. But then they can’t even get into our own hospitals, right? So we’ve walked along with them, encouraged them to become good companies, encouraged them to be innovative and efficient, and we’ve used the same language as them, but they can’t get into the hospitals just down the street on University Avenue.

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They have some recommendations. This is not the first time that the government members will have heard these recommendations around regulatory burdens. OBIO has been coming to this Legislature consistently for five years.

One of their recommendations is to “develop and adopt best practice guidelines for IP and government funding, based on standard market terms and global investment practices.”

They say action is required. There remain challenges related to IP policies and government funding programs that currently limit or impede the flow of capital. Best practices guidelines on how to improve the flow of capital to IP and through granting programs are required. Five years they’ve been here asking for some of these things.

Recommendation 2: “Create innovation procurement demonstration projects at Ontario institutions to showcase how innovative technologies from local companies can be acquired through the existing BPS guidelines.”

The action that is required is to develop demonstration projects for how hospitals can use the existing broader public service guidelines for procurement in Ontario to successfully achieve a value-based, versus solely cost-based, assessment and acquisition of novel health technologies from local companies.

Essentially, these companies want to strengthen the local economy. They are hiring. They struggle to scale up in this province, particularly around manufacturing, and as I indicated, the cost of electricity for some is an issue. But mostly it is regulatory burden, and it stands in the way of improving our health care system. It stands in the way of growing the local economy.

The government can use the same language and say that we all want the same thing, but they had an opportunity to reduce the regulatory burden of the health sector, particularly around innovative technology, and they did not.

The third one, and I’ll leave it at this, is to “establish a roster of ‘early adopter/innovation’ health service providers in Ontario to accelerate the assessment, refinement, and adoption of novel health technologies from local companies.”

They are basically begging the government to look at their products, which the government has in many instances invested in through research grants, and apply them, test them and put them in the market. The action required is to designate an early adopter/innovation hospitals or health service providers in Ontario that would be recognized as institutions that are open to engaging with industry to test, co-develop or adopt novel technologies that will improve health care delivery to Ontarians. These designated hospitals would have different criteria for funding to ensure that they are not penalized as early adopters.

They're basically asking the government not to hurt them, not to hold a grudge against them and not to, as it says, penalize them for being innovative, for trying to grow in the health science sector, to apply that knowledge outside of academic institutions, to transfer that knowledge into the field and to benefit, ultimately, the good people of this province.

I always use Class 1 as my example. Hospital-acquired infections have a huge impact on our health care budget; at last count, it was \$4 billion in costs accrued to hospital-acquired infections. Class 1 is a company in Cambridge. I brought our leader to tour it, and the member from Cambridge knows it well. They have UV technology that reduces germs, which actually keeps people healthy.

You shouldn't go into a hospital and get more sick. You shouldn't go into a hospital and not come out of that hospital if you are able to be cured. But obviously hospital-acquired infections are an emerging issue. Why would the government not incentivize the application of that technology to keep people healthy but also to invest in our companies that are right here in Ontario?

By the way, that company is doing very well in other jurisdictions like the United States and Europe because they recognize that that's a good investment. It's a preventive piece of technology which keeps people healthy—and saves money and creates jobs. It really isn't rocket science. But the health science sector is particularly burdened by onerous regulations that prevent them from being successful, and that, of course, is not addressed in Bill 154.

I feel genuinely bad for this organization, because they've come here five years. Everyone always quotes them; they applaud them; they laud compliments on them. Yet you have a piece of legislation here which actually could help them—and maybe that will be possible once we get it to the committee.

This piece of legislation is going to pass—there's a majority government here—regardless of our concerns. That's always the thing, right? The government likes to point out, "Well, you didn't vote for that piece of legislation" when they have omnibus pieces of legislation. Even if 90% of it is good and there's 10% that isn't, that prevents us from supporting it, like some of the last budgets where there was a cut-off for the children who have autism, or there was the seniors' drugs issue that came up in the budget before that. So there's always something, and you do it on purpose.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Selling off hydro.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, selling off hydro: We're never going to vote for that. You know it and we know it. Who knows what these guys are doing, because nobody knows what the PC Party stands for anymore.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I had to wake you up. Jeez. I'm talking regulatory burden over here.

As they say, and this is one of my favourites songs—it's the Tragically Hip—"They'd say, 'Baby, eat this chicken slow / It's full of all them little bones.'" Boy, you've got to watch the details in the legislation from this government going forward.

I think, at the end of the day, when I meet with businesses and when I meet with advocacy organizations like OBIO, they want a genuine partner in government. They want to know the rules of engagement. They want to be able to navigate the regulations that are necessary, and they want to be able to deal with, in a very streamlined way, the regulations that they see are not.

We may not always agree on what is necessary and what is not. You heard a member of the PC caucus say that no regulations are needed. That's totally not true. We need safety; we need occupational health and safety regulations. You can call it red tape; you can call it a regulatory burden, what have you.

But the example that I've spent a considerable amount of time on today, "Undercover in Temp Nation," is a serious issue. This is where I would like to see a government have regulations in place, particularly with the temporary workers, the part-time, precarious contract workers, who are primarily new immigrants, who are primarily women—have some strength in the regulations that this government is bringing forward, and some oversight.

At the very least, don't give these companies \$4.7 million when they are not building capacity and jobs. They are just bringing the bar down lower and lower and lower from a safety perspective, and from a wages perspective, for sure. I will leave it at that.

In conclusion, though, this piece of legislation leaves us with some questions on a number of the schedules. I look forward to addressing some of the gaps that we see, particularly in schedule 6 and schedule 9, I think it was. I look forward to hearing some of the comments from the other members of the Legislature.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to start off by thanking the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for speaking on this act, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017, and putting a spotlight on the safety involved with reducing regulations.

Mr. Speaker, this House knows that our government is committed to developing modern, evidence-based regulations and to fostering an innovative and supportive business environment. At the same time, we understand we need to do this while still protecting the public interest by maintaining environmental and health standards

and enhancing work safety, many of the issues that were raised by the member opposite.

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Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the bill that is before us. We have worked with stakeholders, businesses, industry and other ministries to bring forward this package of legislative amendments that will help Ontario businesses, large and small. This bill ensures that we'll bring regulations into line with national or international standards so that it is easier for Ontario companies to sell to the world. We heard about a duplication or a disparity in terms of regulations that are required from province to province and how important it is for us to align those regulations and those standards.

This bill ensures that going forward, whenever new regulations are proposed, it makes it easy and straightforward for small businesses to comply with them. This is a bill that continues to move government into the 21st century, making it easier for businesses to comply with government regulations by allowing the electronic submission of documents whenever possible.

These are the changes that we are making to ensure that Ontario remains one of the best places in the world to do business. As I said earlier, in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, I have the opportunity to meet with many of these businesses—businesses that want to stay in Ontario and continue to create the good jobs that they do today.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to comment on the comments, the one-hour lead from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I've listened to all the debate here today, all afternoon. As I was sitting here thinking about what I was going to say, I remembered that 10 years ago almost now, one of the first people I met down here, who had a reception or a meeting, a lobby day, whatever you want to call it, was a gentleman—I don't remember his name now—from the logging industry. They ran a mill up in the north. Hopefully, it's still open; I don't know now. That was my first exposure to red tape, and this isn't all Ontario government. I think at the time he said that he had five different reports that he had to do. He had a young man or woman who did nothing but fill out reports. There was a provincial report, then there was a stumpage report, then there was a federal report, and then the municipality had to have one. He said, "I wish they all had the same lines so I could fill them in. But everybody's is just a little different," probably to justify their job, I suppose, or why they were doing it.

That was my first experience when I came down here. I thought: How the heck could anybody run a business like that? He said, "I'd like to have those guys working in the mill or in the yard, but I have these people running around. It can't even be the same guy because sometimes they come on the same day." That was a good example of red tape when I first came here.

My time is almost up, I see. But I did want to speak about how I do commend the government and they are

finally recognizing—I think I ran three elections on reducing red tape. They're on the road to Damascus. They've finally awoken and, hey, there's always hope for this government. Maybe yet they'll get rid of a lot of these red tape reductions.

I do thank the members for their comments and look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm always pleased to rise. I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo on an hour lead. We all know that doing an hour lead up here is never easy at the best of times but she did a great job.

There are a few things I'd like to talk about. I'm hoping to get a few more minutes over the course of the next few hours to speak. I don't see this a lot. We're not in the House together a lot. I'd like to direct my comments, really, to what she raised to the Minister of Labour.

When we see a 23-year-old male or female going to work, a new Canadian, getting five minutes of training in the province of Ontario and then to find out about it—how did we go about finding out about the crisis that was in this bakery? You find out through the Star in an investigation that nobody—they couldn't go in and check out the place; they had to go in there under cover, in the province of Ontario.

I want to say to the minister, who I have the utmost respect for, that this shouldn't be happening in any of our workplaces. Nobody in the province of Ontario should get five minutes of training in a workplace that is dangerous, that has had a history of having accidents and violations.

What's the reward for that? Instead of maybe even closing the place down or doing something about it, what do we do as a government? I've got to make sure I get this right: They got \$4.7 million in grants—\$4.7 million in grants—when a young 23-year-old girl got killed on the job because of five minutes of training and not understanding the health and safety that's involved with that job.

You know what? I look around this room. My daughter is 20 years old, goes to Brock University—oh, I'm done; sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to add a couple of minutes to this debate to comment on the previous one-hour dialogue, which sometimes is not easy, but you manage.

I think in general, Speaker, I'm hearing that we are somewhat in accordance with what we've proposed here. There might be some amendments, and I think that's what it is all about.

Being a small business owner 99% of my life, I understand some of these challenges. It was difficult at times, because you dealt with the ministry and then sometimes they sent you somewhere else, to another

door. Anything that we can do to reduce that burden on small businesses, because frankly small businesses are there working night and day to make sure that their business survives and creates jobs—so anything that we could do to help them to do that.

I think one of the things that I just want to highlight is that this bill, if passed, would propose the ministries—not just that one ministry, but a number of ministries—will work hand in hand. Sometimes in the past—this is not blaming any government, but in governments of the past, sometimes ministries worked in isolation. It's good to see that this will help bridge some of those gaps.

As we go through this, I think it's welcome news for business—and I'm going to refer mostly to small business, Speaker, because they are the ones with the least amount of time to deal with the regulatory regime. Large companies—not that they're not important—normally have dedicated staff to deal with the regulatory regime.

I hope that we can send this to committee, make the necessary amendments and get it through the House, because, frankly, businesses create jobs and keep our economy moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo can now reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Davenport, Sarnia–Lambton, Niagara Falls and Northumberland–Quinte West for reflecting on some of the comments that I brought forward.

I do think, though, as I indicated with the RFP process for the IT companies which have traditionally been working with this government and were left out of the consultation process and now are going to be disproportionately affected by the movement of this government to just go to large IT companies—that's really not addressing the core Auditor General's issues. I need to reflect on that.

I need to bring attention to the government once again that the Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization has solutions around streamlining the regulatory world for the health sciences. They want to be part of the solution, they want to strengthen the economy and they have ideas that actually will positively impact the health care system. We will be bringing some of those amendments, hopefully, to the committee as well.

What I want to say is that, with regard to health and safety and where regulation is needed, three temp agency workers have died at Fiera or its affiliated companies. In 1999, a 17-year-old temp named Ivan Golyashov was killed when he was cleaning a dough mixer; 69-year-old Aydin Kazimov was crushed by a transport truck; and now we have Amina, who was caught in a machine by her hijab. This is a company where regulations have not been enforced—191 violations.

We have this great disconnect between perhaps a genuine sense of streamlining some regulations to make sure that businesses understand the rules of engagement, but we are certainly not upholding the safety of workers, from a regulatory perspective, in the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the bill, Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017. I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa–Vanier, the member for Barrie and the Minister of Labour.

First, at the outset, of course, the purpose of this particular bill is to help build Ontario up and to deliver on one of our top priorities: to grow the economy and create jobs. I must say, listening to our government lead-off with the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, that I think that we can all see the tremendous success that he, personally, as a minister, has had in encouraging business to invest here in Ontario. The type of energy he has put in that portfolio has been absolutely remarkable, so we are enjoying a very strong economy here in Ontario. There's no question that we want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in this growth that we're seeing in our productivity and so on.

One of the ways that we want to do it is to ensure that we reduce outdated unnecessary regulations in order to help businesses, so that they can focus on their role in growing our economy. Now, of course, we do need to do this extremely carefully. The members of the third party have alluded to when perhaps there is not sufficient regulation in some particular businesses. I'm very conscious of that need to look at regulation extremely carefully, because one has to ask oneself: Why was the regulation put there in the first place? Was there perhaps a health and safety issue?

I first remember meeting the member from Oxford in his role in the previous government, when he was tasked with looking at reducing red tape for the Harris government. I must say that in that particular time, there was some slashing of regulation that resulted in harm.

In fact, as the medical officer of health for York region, I remember always receiving the reports of water testing in my jurisdiction to make sure that, in fact, water was safe to drink. In slashing a number of those regulations, of course, this was a contributory factor. When medical officers of health no longer received results from water testing, we had the Walkerton tragedy, and people unfortunately passed away. We do need to look very, very carefully, so that when we do reduce red tape or regulatory burdens on business, we also look across the spectrum and ensure that, in fact, health and safety is absolutely paramount.

Our government is particularly looking, in collaboration with a number of ministries, at how we can amend a number of statutes. This bill in particular, if passed, will amend more than 40 statutes and further support our goal of making Ontario the easiest place in North America to do business. In working with the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry

of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we're going to make a real difference in the lives of those business owners that are currently facing the burden of unnecessary regulation. This is the type of activity that our government is very much involved in.

This bill pertains particularly to business, but I must say that in my own ministry, we're looking at a number of measures to reduce red tape for those on social assistance and those with developmental disabilities. We're finding that this will also streamline our processes as a government, and this is being very broadly welcomed.

This bill is actually the second of our annual burden reduction bills, so we're making real progress on this. Specifically, in this particular bill, we will implement five new burden-reduction initiatives. I'm sure my colleagues will elaborate further.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to address the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ça me fait plaisir, évidemment, de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler du projet de loi 154, pour la réduction des formalités administratives. Le fardeau réglementaire doit être revu régulièrement.

It's important to focus on what this bill is about and what it is not about. It's certainly not a bill about de-regulation; it's a bill that continues to stress the importance of environmental and labour regulation, but ensures that we are actually monitoring compliance adequately and that we are modernizing our standards. It's also a bill that is not about privatization of governmental services, and it's very important that we pay attention to that.

It is good public policy, good law reform, to indeed regularly assess whether our regulatory system is efficient. The normal questions are: Do regulations still work? Do they accomplish what they were supposed to do? Can they be simplified? Are they in contradiction with other standards that are now being imposed on one industry? This is what this bill is all about. It's about ensuring that the regulatory burden continues to be justified, streamlined if possible, and, indeed, complies with good international standards.

It does so for several sectors that were contacted for this: auto parts, food processing, financial services, mining, chemical manufacturing, forestry and tourism. It doesn't deal with other sectors which eventually should certainly be part of an evaluation of whether their regulatory framework is adequate or not.

Il ne s'agit pas évidemment de déréglementation; au contraire, il s'agit de maximiser la façon dont les argents gouvernementaux qui sont mis à la disposition de l'appareil réglementaire sont bien distribués.

I could not agree more with the elegant riddle of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He's not there anymore, but I really appreciated the way he made it rhyme, to say that it was important to actually continue to have good regulation for safety and environmental standards.

Il y a encore beaucoup à faire, évidemment, pour améliorer les services et l'imputabilité des services gouvernementaux.

I will speak briefly to the four principles that are put forth for future regulations. To my mind, they are indeed really important as a way of framing what good regulations should look like.

The first commitment of the government is to ensure that for every additional dollar that is asked of a particular sector, \$1.25 would be reduced throughout the government. That's a way in which to calculate the cost of compliance and ensure that there is some reduction for all businesses. It's across government, so it does not imply, for example, that if the environmental regulations are improved, the safety does not need to come from the environmental regulations but may come from across the government—a decrease in the cost of compliance.

The second principle that I want to speak to—which, in my mind, is particularly important—is harmonization with other jurisdictions.

Si un standard existe quelque part, pourquoi ne pas l'adopter aussi en Ontario?

Indeed, one of the complaints that I think has been raised in this House and elsewhere is when businesses are faced with a multiplicity of standards that are all aimed in the same direction but just ask for different forms or slightly different issues or compliance records.

I think the commitment here is that if there is a good standard that already exists, the commitment is that the standard should be applied. Now, it does leave the discretion of the government to, for example, opt out of a standard if indeed it is not sufficient, because we know that doing good regulations is actually an iterative process and needs to continue to be online.

I'll just speak very briefly to the third, fourth and fifth principles. The fifth one is to submit electronically; there's nothing too worrisome about that.

The third principle, though, is to look at all regulations through the lens of small businesses. I think to add this process of evaluating what does it look like for a small business to receive this regulation will improve, generally, the way in which we do regulations.

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Finally, the fourth principle is to have a method of compliance that is risk-based, that is, reward businesses that actually maintain good compliance records so that the enforcement dollars that we have are spent at the right place. In principle, I think, we should avoid then having enforcement dollars that are not there when the safety of workers is jeopardized.

In my view, we'll have to continue to debate this piece of legislation, and I'm happy to join the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Just before I go on debating the bill, I'd just like to say thank you to the Minister of Labour. On Friday night, I attended the Threads of Life conference at the Kempenfelt Centre on his behalf. The Threads of Life community—and I'm telling this

particularly for my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo—is for families who have lost someone, a family member, a friend through an industrial accident.

I did not know until I was there that my neighbour's child, when he was 21, was working on construction. He was up very high on a roof. He did have his harness on. He had been up before lunch with the harness on and was hooked on. He went up after his lunch, got up on the roof, and his drill was about five feet that way and the hook was six feet that way, so he stepped over to pick up the drill. Someone had covered an area of the roof that had nothing underneath it, and he fell through and was killed. He certainly knew safety rules but unfortunately, he made a bad decision.

It's very sad, but it's a wonderful group. They have a time of reflection, they support each other and they do this every year. Unfortunately, for most of the families that were there, most of the people who have been lost through accidents were young people between the ages of 18 and 24, which is really quite sad and unnecessary. So I just thought I'd say thank you to the minister for allowing me to attend that.

Talking about Bill 154, there's a way that this works with Ontario's economic strategy. The Business Growth Initiative is the government's strategy to increase the province's global competitiveness. The three pillars of the Business Growth Initiative are creating a strong, innovative-driven economy; catapulting more Ontario businesses forward through scaling up; and lowering business costs through modernized regulation. I have been at several places in Barrie where we have contributed towards innovative-driven businesses and also towards scaling up so that they can compete at a higher level than just locally or in Ontario. They are now competing globally.

Reducing red tape is one of the pillars of Ontario's global competitiveness strategy. I know Minister Duguid has worked very hard with other ministers to do that—many thanks to Minister Duguid. He's done a wonderful job, and we're going to be losing a wonderful MPP and minister.

The annual burden reduction bill helps foster an innovative and dynamic business environment by removing unintended regulatory burdens, by modernizing government lines of business and making complementary housekeeping amendments to reduce the uncertainty caused by outdated and obsolete legislative requirements.

A smarter regulatory system will enable Ontario to lower the cost of compliance for business and help build a competitive business environment, supportive of investment and exports. By ensuring our acts are up to date and relevant, the government is creating the right climate for businesses to create jobs and to grow the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we have the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to my colleagues who have spoken on this bill so far, from all sides of the House.

I believe everybody in this House believes in a free market economy—and we've got a very successful

economy as a result of that in North America. The role of government, obviously, is to regulate within that market. I think we've got a multi-dimensional responsibility, as a Legislature, to ensure that businesses are attracted to Ontario; that businesses create jobs in Ontario; and, when they create those jobs, that people work in a safe manner. It's said over and over again, and I don't think it can be said enough, that it's our job and my job in particular, as the Minister of Labour, to make sure that everybody comes home safely at the end of the day.

It's great to be able to stand here and tell people that Ontario is one of the safest places in the world you could possibly work. We should be proud of what our regulations have done. We've been able to cut the number of incidents in half since 2003. That should make us proud, but it shouldn't for a second make us satisfied. We shouldn't rest on our laurels. We know that there's more to do.

Certainly, there are a number of regulatory frameworks that impact upon small business and large business in the province of Ontario. Most of the time, and for the best of reasons, those regulations are put in place to deal with issues of the day that may interact with society in a negative way, but what often happens is, technologies change; times change. Probably the best example, I think, used to be in the city of Etobicoke: You weren't allowed to put more than an inch and a half of bathwater in your bath. At some point, that probably made sense, Speaker. I'm not sure it would make sense anymore. That's the type of thing.

When we start to look at things that we put in place for certain conditions that existed in the past, we have to ask ourselves, as a government—as we introduce new regulations to keep pace with that technology, I think we need to have an eye to the past and ask ourselves the question: Are the regulations that we've put in place for the best of reasons in the past still relevant today? Sometimes we find that they aren't.

We often find that you get people in business who could be doing profitable things, who could be earning more money for the company so they could pay their employees more money—they often find themselves going through the motions of dealing with regulations that simply have lost their meaning in the past.

So there's room, I think, for good regulations, and there's room for new regulations.

The member from Niagara Falls pointed to a circumstance that was in the Toronto Star recently. We would look at an issue like that and say, as a government, is there something we need to do to make that situation better?

We also, at the same time, need to make sure we're taking a sensible approach and that the regulations that have been put in place in the past are those that are still meaningful and are still changing lives today. Sometimes they aren't.

Previous bills, when it came to burden reduction, focused on cutting old red tape, getting rid of the regulations that simply had lost their meaning. What we're doing in this regard, though, is interesting and unique,

and that's ensuring that when we apply a filter to the new regulations—what we're going to do is ensure that they're modern, they make sense, they're efficient, they're effective and they're done in the most efficient way when it comes to the ability of our companies to be able to deal with them.

We know that our government needs to build this province up. We need to deliver on one of our top priorities: We need to grow the economy. We need to create those long-term jobs that we all want in each of our own communities. So if we can get rid of the outdated regulations while keeping the more meaningful ones, we know then that we've got regulations in place that are pivotal to helping business and to keeping people protected in whatever way they need to be protected.

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But at the same time, the economy is growing. I don't think the two should in any way be mutually exclusive. You can have a strong economy, Speaker, and you can have sensible regulations. That is exactly what I think is contained in this bill, and I hope all members will find a way to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's very good to see you in the chair this afternoon. It's very good to be able to stand and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West–Glanbrook on this important issue.

I have to say that I do appreciate the words from the Minister of Labour this afternoon. I find myself agreeing with a great deal of them. Quite frankly, I think it's high time that we had conversations such as this here in the Legislature. It's exciting for me to see the government taking action on this important issue.

I think we all have to acknowledge the important place that regulations do play in protecting the vulnerable in our society, and protecting the health and well-being of constituents and residents of Ontario, but we have to recognize the burden that onerous red tape can be on small businesses and on innovation and creativity within our entrepreneurial free market.

At the same time, I think that this is a good step forward in reducing that type of red tape. Bill 154, the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, hopefully will be a step in the right direction to begin to address some of this burden. I worked, in a previous life, as a legislative assistant for a member of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations for the federal Parliament in Ottawa. At that time, I did have the opportunity to do quite a bit of scrutinizing of regulations myself. Seeing some of the damage that overregulation can cause and the burden that can have on businesses—and also some of the necessary regulations that are needed to ensure the safety and well-being of constituents—had a huge impact on me.

I appreciate being able to hear the Minister of Labour's contributions to this important subject today,

and I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate on this legislation this afternoon.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would like to start off by saying that I certainly support any removal of red tape that's going to support businesses in Ontario. I also would like to say that the Minister of Labour has shown seriousness about safety and health. With him coming from the auto industry and me coming from the steel industry, we both know how devastating safety and health can be on families when things aren't done properly.

On the other hand, Speaker, I have to be a little bit of a devil's advocate here. Many times, over the years, I've witnessed that regulations are fine, but they're never enforced. I'll give you an example: the MOE, on landfills. They might go in there and inspect one truck out of 500 in a week, where it's supposed to be non-hazardous and maybe hazardous stuff slips through. They have cut back. As the landfill continues to get older, they cut back on the visits; they cut back on the scrutiny. This is what has gone on throughout this province.

The regulations throughout this province: They're there, but they're never enforced. We don't have enough inspectors, we don't follow through and the fines are minuscule, to say the least. Companies that do serious polluting—we saw what happened in Niagara the other week. The Americans dumped in there. I've seen things in Hamilton Bay. The member from St. Catharines has seen things over the years; it's outrageous, the things that have gone on. They get a little slap on the hand and then, two years later, they're back at it. Until we can support the regulations with proper inspections, enforcement and proper fines, I'm not going to be over the moon about this.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'd like to commend the government members who have shared with the House the attributes of this particular bill. The mantra of the extreme right-wing is that all regulations are bad and that somehow if we deregulate and remove all regulations, the economy will thrive. More moderate people will say that is not the case. There is sometimes a need for regulation, sometimes there is not, so we have to carefully analyze each and every time, as we have with this particular bill, to determine whether the regulation is necessary.

This bill deals not only with regulations from the past but also any that may be promulgated in the future, putting it through a lens that really says, "Is it necessary and can it be applied in a practical manner?"

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek made appropriate reference to the fact that if you have a regulatory regime, you must be prepared to enforce it. That is why the government has added—particularly in the Ministry of Labour, since the minister was up—a significant number of new individuals who are there to help enforce the regulations that are there to protect the health and safety of workers and others in the province.

Each government endeavours to do this. I think to be fair to each government, they endeavour to look at the regulations to determine which ones today do not apply; they may have applied 25 or 30 years ago but not today. You always want to determine, when you are bringing in a new regulation—because regulations flow from legislation—whether it is going to achieve what you want or whether it's going to be too much of an impediment. That's why the consultation that takes place on an on-going basis with those on the other end of the regulation is essential, and that is what this bill endeavours to do and why I will be supporting it.

I commend my colleagues for their speeches.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I find it interesting today that there are many members in the House that are trying to conflate the term “regulation” with “red tape.” They are not the same thing. As I said earlier, a definition of red tape is rules and regulations that are unnecessary and prevent things from being done quickly and easily. There's a whole host of other definitions, but they are different words; they mean different things.

I'm going to give a few more examples of red tape that the minister was seeking earlier today. I'm glad to see that the Minister of Labour is here because some of them apply to labour. Catherine Wood, the owner of Mahogany spa, earlier this year submitted her defence to a complaint. The Ministry of Labour lost her argument, and they admitted they lost it, but by the time they had lost it and recognized it, her time for appeal had expired. She therefore had to go through an expensive OLRB hearing because the Ministry of Labour lost her presentation.

I'll give you another example, of a metal stamping firm in Smiths Falls. One Ministry of Labour inspector came in and demanded that the fabrication machine was dangerous and had to be relocated, at a cost of \$25,000. Gord, the owner, spent the \$25,000 and moved the machine. Everything was okay. Four months later, another Ministry of Labour inspector came in and said, “That is a terrible installation. It has to be moved.” They moved it back, at a cost of another \$25,000 to its original location. Speaker, Gord should have just spent the \$50,000 fine and he would have achieved the same thing, and safety was still in place. Those are some examples of red tape: unnecessary regulatory burdens that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The Minister of Community and Social Services can now wrap up.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to so many of our colleagues who have addressed this important bill today.

The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook—a very gracious response to our efforts here. I'm very pleased to hear from you.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: Yes, indeed, proper inspection is absolutely vital. I think we all would agree with your comments in that regard.

The chief government whip, as usual, bringing his great experience of so many years in this House and his wisdom to this particular bill; and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington ensuring we are clear on the difference between regulation and red tape.

So all in all, this bill is a huge step forward for businesses. One of the important aspects, of course, is the savings that are going to accrue to businesses. On an annual basis, we provide annual reports that detail the progress we're making. The most recent one was June 27, 2017. It featured the fact that Ontario has been surpassing our target of \$100 million in savings by 50% and two years ahead of schedule. We found an estimated savings of \$512 million and 6.5 million hours to businesses since 2011.

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This is real progress. We acknowledge that there is more work to do. We're going to continue in this vein with our annual burden reduction reports that will detail the impact that our progressive policies are having on this province.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 154, the proposed Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017. I'm just going to start my notes off. The minister spoke earlier, talking about unintended consequences of some legislation and what those may be, so I'm going to remind the people of Ontario who are listening and those in the Legislature today of some unnecessary and unintended consequences of things like the Green Energy Act that the Liberal government imposed on the people of Ontario. There were lots of unintended consequences there: 300% to 400% increased energy rates that were unintended consequences.

The unintended consequences of the Hydro One sale, which 85% of the people of Ontario have said they didn't want to happen; two gas plants that were never built; the unintended consequences of increasing hydro bills that are putting people in really challenging situations; and then when you add that onto the red tape burden that this government has added and the increased fees that will result, particularly with the minimum wage increase that's going to happen over 18 months, a 32% increase—I wonder about the unintended consequences there.

A couple of the people from the Liberal Party, when they've spoken, have said that they're the protectors of small business, that they've done so much for small business. I wonder if the small business owners I've spoken to would like to have a chat with them about those things I just brought up.

The Minister of Economic Development was proud of getting the Golden Scissors Award. I wonder if there was ever a chance that he might have thought of shredding or clipping a whole bunch of the red tape involved with things like the backroom Quebec hydro deal, which we found out about through a secret source. They said, “Oh, we're not really going to do that,” but why did we have

this discussion with Quebec if we were never intending to go down there? I wonder if anyone in this House wonders if there are any unintended consequences that the province of Ontario might suffer if they go through with that?

I wonder if maybe with the Golden Scissors Award they could have shredded—like they have with some other documents that we've heard about in this House, Mr. Speaker—or cut up those contracts for the green energy contracts, for which I believe about \$133 billion will be the net cost to the people of Ontario. We've now been told that a number of those contracts could have been shredded or cut up with scissors with no consequence or penalty to the people of Ontario, and that might have truly brought our rates down.

The government likes to talk about the 25% relief they've given with hydro rates, but they never really tell you about the 300% to 400% that they've gone up. At the end of the day, there's red tape that has added to those costs that are significantly impacting our businesses, and I just want to get a few of those on record.

The chief government whip, I believe, was talking about health and safety and regulations, so I just want to clarify before I really begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker. There is not one person, I don't believe—on any side of this House, you would hope—who doesn't believe you need regulation for the health and safety of the people of Ontario. I'll definitely stand on record today stating that absolutely we need health and safety regulations. What this is talking about, though, Mr. Speaker, is unnecessary red tape, and I'm going to give a couple of examples.

The Assistive Devices Program: When someone has to wait the time they do to even get an inspection for their wheelchair, if they're bound to an electronic wheelchair like Jeff Preston—18 months, he was going to be told. There was a whole bunch of red tape issues in there that could have been solved overnight so that he could actually have his wheelchair and his livelihood. He's a professor at Fanshawe College, but every day that he had to live without understanding whether he was going to get an inspection, he might have actually been left at home and not able to do his job. I don't see how that's a health and safety issue. That's a red tape thing that could have been cleaned up.

The Health Care Connect program: The way it works right now, you cannot get on Health Care Connect until you actually lose your physician. If you know your physician is going to retire, for example, you can't apply to Health Care Connect to get on that list so that you can be in the queue and keep the continuum of your health care going until your doctor leaves. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's a red-tape administrative burden that you would think a government that's been in power for 14 years might have been able to clean up and correct.

A person needing to get a referral to a specialist needs a physician, and there's a red tape glitch in there. If you're an orphan patient—sadly, many of us today have that. Part of that is because we have not been managing the health care system. I have my health critic, Jeff Yurek, from Elgin–Middlesex–London—right?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Still.

Mr. Bill Walker: Still, yes. He has brought up all kinds of challenges in regard to the medical state that we're in.

A lot of this goes back to: Again, why can we not make these moves? Why can we not fix systems when we see our systems, all the time, have been broken for 14 years? We always hear, "We're working on that. We're going to study that. We're going to go and look at this." Fourteen years. Some of these things, with a stroke of a pen, could have been done.

As I mentioned earlier, the minister from Scarborough Centre, the Minister of Economic Development, mentioned unintended consequences. I was hoping that in my remarks I would get on the record that we don't need—when he's a minister, he can do a ministerial decree. He could do that in the matter of a day and get it done by the end of the week, I believe.

Interjection: Hours.

Mr. Bill Walker: Or hours; absolutely.

I'm hopeful that he's not going to actually be one of these people who adds to the red tape burden and that when he sees something like that, that can be fixed overnight, he'll utilize the prerogative of his ministerial position and say, "I want that fixed by the end of the week." At times, I'm sure that can happen and will happen, but I certainly don't see much evidence. What we see is them adding more and more burden. Small businesses continually come through my door saying, "They're adding more and more and more paperwork. I have less and less time to actually spend with my customer and provide the service or the goods that I have." At the end of the day, that makes them less profitable, and what do we see? More and more people leaving our province.

Another one, in an area like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the beef capital of Ontario—in both of those great counties, Bruce and Grey, we have abattoirs where they again came in. I believe my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who has a little bit of experience in the agricultural industry, suggested again one that I've heard about a lot—

Interjection: That's his Conservative side.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's his Conservative side coming through. Maybe Uncle Ernie and he have more talks than we know about, but anyway.

It's about abattoirs, Mr. Speaker, and a red tape regulation that made them have a his-and-hers washroom in a very small rural spot, where, again, you almost never have more than two people in the facility at a time. They put added onus and burden on them, not only for the cost, but the administration of getting all the testing and all of the licences and all of the approvals that have put a number of our small abattoirs out of business—another hit to rural Ontario.

I'm going to now move more to some other specifics that I'd like to get on the record on behalf of the people of my great riding and across this great province.

Cutting red tape and reducing the regulatory burden is one of our party's key pillars for economic development and a more prosperous Ontario, along with investing in infrastructure, creating competitive energy prices and addressing Ontario's growing skills gap.

Our leader, Patrick Brown, and caucus have been a strong voice for small businesses—and large businesses, medium-size businesses and anybody who wants to thrive and make a go in Ontario—speaking up against the many red tape regulations that have grown under this government over the last 14 years.

I'll be talking about a whole bunch of details in a little bit, including concerns in the construction industry, which has been burdened by restrictive and unnecessary regulations and red tape for years. We've heard it since I've gotten here in my six years. I don't ever hear them really saying, "Yeah, they've addressed that." They keep saying, "Well, we've listened to them." When I ask, "What does the government do?" they say, "Well, they say they'll listen, and they'll go and they'll look at it, and they'll study it." It's been 14 years. I don't hear many success stories of, "Yes, they've fixed that. They know about it and they've fixed it." They're going to study it more. They're going to kick it down the road longer.

The mining sector, again, I believe, in this House in question period: We went from right in the top five to—now we're 16th in the world in mining. We have the Ring of Fire, which, again, we've heard about. I've heard about it since my six years here. I don't think there's been one shovel put in the ground yet.

You talk about probably utilizing red tape in their defence; that's what they're using to hold things back and not move forward. They keep talking at budget time every year: "We're the proponents of the Ring of Fire. We're going to put another \$1 billion," but I don't think any money has been spent, and I think at times they hide behind things like red tape to slow those processes down.

That's probably because they run a deficit every year. They said, "We're going to give you \$1 billion," but when they actually go and look in the bank account, that \$1 billion is not there, as we all know, so we use a little glitch of red tape to hold things back, and another year of delay.

The farming, the agricultural sector, as well as many others, and those from my riding, including a long, arduous red tape story that followed a tenacious quarry proponent, Ted Hayes: Ted is a guy who already has businesses. He's got developments. He's a guy who has been fabulous for our community. He provides lots of employment. He's built seniors' housing and he's built a number of things and provided employment for lot of people. He's been trying to get a quarry. The ironic thing is that there's a quarry right next door that's been operating for years, so all there is is a line on somebody's map. He's been trying now, I believe, for nine years to actually get his quarry through, and he keeps getting red tape and burdens put in front of him. He has to go and find another study. He has to get another test. Mr. Speaker, we have to find ways to work with people like

Ted Hayes, who are actually the drivers of our province: small businesses that believe in their community, that want to make life better.

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That certainly opens it up for those young people in front of you, our pages. It's their generation that we should be working towards, not finding ways to say, "No, no, no, and more no," before a business owner even has a chance.

Let's be clear: This government has taken Ontario from an attractive place to invest to one of the highest-cost jurisdictions in North America to do business. The Ministry of Finance's own economic accounts indicate a significant decline in the business investment in our great province. The skyrocketing hydro rates, higher taxes, soaring provincial debt and burdensome red tape under this government alone—the Liberal government—has resulted in a loss of more than 350,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs.

More recently, it has resulted in the closure of a couple that I can reference: Enviroshake in Chatham, 50 jobs; and the closure of Peterborough's General Electric plant, 300 jobs. And since the rollout of the new cap-and-trade cash grab and labour reforms, there is even more discontent and less confidence that Ontario business will rebound. A lot of people are very nervous out in our communities across the province, wondering whether they are going to be here. What does that do to our great province?

A document obtained from the Ministry of Finance under freedom of information earlier this year indicated, "There are fewer jobs today relative to the population than before the recession."

The Ontario Economic Report 2017 from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: The report revealed that only 24% of businesses have confidence in the province's economy—not a great stat. They'll come out with all kinds of things that they're saying, but at the end of the day, 24% is not a great barometer of confidence in our province. Since Ms. Wynne and her caucus colleagues moved into the Premier's office in 2013, business confidence in the provincial economy has been cut in half—50%. So we have 24% of the people who are confident; we have 50% who have lost confidence. Those are not the numbers that I think we should be looking at, Mr. Speaker, and being proud.

Let's not forget the recently released Fraser Institute report on labour markets in Canada and the United States that placed Ontario 44th out of 60 jurisdictions in an evaluation which considered unemployment, productivity and job creation.

All this is hard proof that the Wynne government policies are having a serious negative impact on our economic prospects. We want to create the right environment for job creation and investment to support hard-working Ontarians, and provide a future for our youth. We recognize a new direction is needed to rectify the fiscal and economic mess the Wynne Liberals have created in Ontario. So we welcome Bill 154 as a step in

that direction, and support its intent to set annual burden reduction targets across all ministries.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Small step.

Mr. Bill Walker: A very small step, yes. But at least it's a step in the right direction, so I'll try to stay there.

More specifically, to offset every dollar of new administrative cost to businesses by removing \$1.25 of old and unnecessary costs—Mr. Speaker, I just want to put this in context for the people listening at home and those watching today.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: And sitting.

Mr. Bill Walker: And sitting.

Hydro has gone up 300% to 400% and the government keeps saying, "Aren't we great? We gave you a 25% reduction." Well, in my world, Mr. Speaker, that's not a really good return on investment. It's not really a great thing when you start the fire and come in and pour a glass of water and say, "I am the saviour." At the end of the day, we need to make sure we're doing the right thing. We can't be going down a path and continuing to go down that path when we know it's wrong.

Many of these proposed measures are about reducing the paper burden, validating electronic communications or adopting international standards. I understand the proposal was drawn up from the business community, the Regulatory Modernization Committee, and requests for clarification of existing regulations.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business conservatively estimates the cost of regulation in Ontario has grown from—I'm going to round it up—\$13 billion in 2005 to just under \$15 billion in 2014. That's going, again, in the wrong direction. It's kind of like the debt and the deficit, Mr. Speaker. They're going in the wrong direction. I've heard it every year: "We're in great shape. We're wonderful. We're one of the leaders," and yet our debt and our deficits keep continuing to go up. That's not good news for our next generation.

This is why it's important to focus on streamlining compliance for smaller businesses, ensuring that any new or amended regulations do not create any undue burdens—any unintended consequences, as I've referenced before, such as the Green Energy Act and the escalating hydro rates and the number of people unemployed under this government's tenure—and that a positive, safe and healthy work environment is truly maintained. Adopting international or national standards, where they see fit, are okay, but let's make sure that they work.

I want to speak a little about OBIO. We have technology right here in our backyard in Ontario, developed here, and yet because of technical glitches—and I would say that that falls within unnecessary red tape—those businesses cannot sell in Ontario, so they sell in other jurisdictions, they sell in other provinces, they sell across the world. But we have not figured out how to get our house in order so they can buy made-in-Ontario products and services that can benefit the people of Ontario. We find ways to put in more regulations; we find ways to put new rules in that actually stifle the creativity and the

ability for our own producers to sell in our own great province of Ontario.

It seems at times that we should be rewarding the good actors, the people who are doing things well. We should be going to them and saying, "You're doing well. How do we learn from you? How do we improve?" Let's use those centres of excellence and make our regulations more generic for them, as opposed to what we seem to do under the Liberals. They find a flaw and, instead of going after the person who is actually offending, they go after the whole industry—or the whole province, in some cases—and add yet another regulatory burden to them. As opposed to saying to the person, "You're not in compliance. You're not doing this appropriately. You're not keeping people safe, so we're going to figure out how to make you do it," they're whitewashing across, instead of going after the offenders. I have seen that in so many examples in my six years here. They just want to whitewash and pretend they're the saviours of everyone, as opposed to going after the people who are truly offending.

Providing businesses with opportunities to submit any required documentation electronically to avoid costly and time-consuming paper submissions: Here I speak about my colleague and good friend from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark. His Bill 3 aimed to allow auto dealers to register the vehicles they sell through an online portal. Sadly, the Liberal government left Ontario car dealers out of their red-tape reduction bill. They know about it; it's been put in front of them. It has nothing to do with partisanship. All of us have vehicles in our ridings, Mr. Speaker. Why would they not choose to address this? Why would they not at least allow it to be discussed?

The estimated cost saving for businesses affected by these amendments alone is between \$6.3 million and \$7.9 million, once the proposed amendments are implemented. But I believe the actual cost to the economy, as shared by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, is actually just under \$15 billion. So there's supposed to be—and I don't need the headline—\$6.3 million saved. Again, they don't tell you that because of their red-tape initiatives and them not addressing it, there's a \$15-billion hit to our economy.

For those who missed me mentioning it before, I'll repeat: Ontario currently has over 380,000 rules and regulations, so burden reduction is desperately needed. We're not going to argue with that at all. We applaud them, in fact. Many of the suggested measures are long overdue, but at the end of the day, we want to see that they actually get done.

I'm going to go back to my friend Ted Hayes, a colleague I've known for many years, a great guy in our business community in Northern Bruce Peninsula, in the little village of Lion's Head. If you've never been there, I encourage everyone to come and visit. It's a great, great spot.

Ted started a business many years ago and eventually expanded into multiple industries, from building retirement homes to developing land to house the LCBO in Lion's Head and eventually developing a quarry, and

EPH tools, and he also farms. He's involved significantly in our community and wants to continue. He wants to have a place where his kids and grandkids and friends and family and new people can come to our area and enjoy our little piece of paradise.

He's been trying to develop this quarry for 10 years, but because of red tape and many, many vague regulations, he can't get there. He's one of many who have fallen victim to the same regulatory burden. He invested hundreds of thousands of dollars, and at every turn it seemed as if his efforts were being sabotaged by the bureaucracy while his money was spreading thinner and thinner on multiple ministry-mandated studies and more studies and then legal costs.

One of the keys—and I've said it in this House many times—is the duty to consult our First Nations. No one is arguing that there shouldn't be a duty to consult. What we're saying is that it should be absolutely black and white, crystal clear, unambiguous—what does it mean to consult?—so that he or any proponent who goes in knows what they have to do if they want to get that licence. It needs to be addressed. Again, this government has known about this. I have addressed it many times and they have refused to do it.

At the end of the day—I'm running out of time. I'm not going to get everything in here that I wanted, but I want to talk about one in regard to the assistive device program. As critic for accessibility, I think it's very important. My colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington brought this up earlier, about the assistive device program.

I have a young man, as I say, Jeff Preston: 18 months just to get his wheelchair inspected. He relies on this. He's actually confined to a wheelchair. He's a phenomenal young man. He has endured every hardship there is and yet he stays positive; he stays strong. He's got his education. He is a great proponent out there, a great contributing member of our community and our society. And yet, because of administrative bureaucracies and red tape, it's 18 months just to get an inspection. Every day, he lived in fear of being confined to his apartment because he didn't have his wheelchair in a workable condition. That's absolutely unacceptable.

In 2009, this program had a backlog of 3,200 clients and a 16-week delay. In 2015, I raised concerns after hearing that the ADP was going through a 50-week delay and challenged the ministry to address it and wipe out that backlog. I'm glad to say that we actually had some success in that area. But again, they knew about it. They had all the time in the world. They had 10 years, at least, under their tenure of that program and could have done that.

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Health Care Connect is one. Again, I hear all the time from people that it's frustrating to know that someone has to actually fire their doctor to get on a list to get a new doctor, without any thought process that this is actually going to work for them.

At the end of the day, I applaud the government for stepping forward, but it can't just be hollow words and

headlines. We want to see action. We want to see them actually address things so that we have less red tape, lower costs and the ability for business and all people, especially our young people, to know that we have hope and that we have opportunity going forward. We need to reduce that red tape burden as much as we can.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like to follow the hard-working member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the fast-talking member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and I will.

But first I want to get back for a moment to one of his colleagues, who gave us a definition of red tape. I've got a couple more for you. It refers to “excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that is considered redundant or bureaucratic, and hinders or prevents action or decision-making,” “excessive bureaucratic rigmarole,” and “official routine or procedure marked by excessive complexity which results in delay or inaction.”

But the one I like best, Speaker, is about this red tape bill. This cutting-red-tape bill is a weak attempt by the Liberals, who chose red as their party colour, to weaken the bluster of a yet-to-be-seen Conservative blue election platform promising to cut red tape. And that's what this is. You knew they were going to bring in a platform of cutting red tape, so you brought forth a bill, so that they can't stand up and say, “We're the ones who are going to cut red tape.” You can stand up and say, “No, no, no. We got there first.”

I do like what the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said about Mr. Clark's bill and registering new car sales through an online portal, because that would help the auto industry, and anything we can do to help Ontario's auto industry is worth pursuing.

My friend from Niagara Falls, Mr. Gates, has been standing up here for days talking about that two-week-old strike in Ingersoll at CAMI, urging the government to get up and stand up for the workers in Ingersoll and try to convince General Motors to keep that plant here in Ontario before it sneaks away to Mexico. We've seen too many plants go to Mexico. We have to stand up for our auto industry.

Thank you for bringing that up, sir.

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

Hon. Chris Ballard: I thought I'd just take a couple of the minutes that are allocated to return some of the debate back to the fundamentals of what we're talking about here today.

We made a commitment to introduce the annual burden reduction bill so that all ministries would have access to a regular and ongoing instrument to cut red tape. This bill is the second of an annual burden reduction bill. It's going to help Ontario ministries in updating their legislation and streamlining their processes to remove red tape for businesses and create savings in both time and money.

Previous bills focused on cutting old red tape, stuff that is already established. This bill is forward-looking.

It's going to ensure that a filter is applied by government to new regulations to ensure that they are modern, that they're efficient and effective, and that they minimize impacts on our business community. The first bill looked at what has been done by past governments; this bill is looking forward to what legislation and what regulations might be put in place in future.

There are five broad guiding principles that will ensure that the government focuses on the impacts to business when creating new regulations, to help ensure that we regulate in an efficient and effective way.

One of the key things is that for every new administrative cost imposed on business due to new regulations, the government has to find a savings of \$1.25 as an offset by removing unnecessary costs elsewhere.

There are a lot of very critical things in this legislation, Speaker. I was happy to speak for my two minutes.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound does make the case for the importance, at times, for the heavy hand of government, certainly in areas of health, health care and safety. But as MPPs we hear so much about the plethora of rules and regulations and red tape, of forms to fill out and things that require people in business or running a farm to really do a government job—the hoops to jump through to meet compliance. Of course, then we think of the people who are hired at the other end to receive all these forms, to read them and then to get back.

As MPPs, we have little say in the regulations that inevitably arrive after we pass or amend legislation. Really, ultimately, if there's a problem, we are the problem.

Here we are: We've come back in September. In the traditional legislative calendar, as I understand it—certainly, when I started here—we wouldn't come back until after Thanksgiving. I have had some very frustrated people explain to me, "You know, take a break. If you guys and gals could take a year off—don't pass any more laws," because the regulations and the bureaucratic red tape inevitably follow.

As a student, a number of years ago, I remember going to a physician at the health unit to get, maybe, a shot to travel or something. He probably spent half an hour on a rant about the fact that he couldn't be a physician for so much of his time because he had to fill out forms. Now, since then, physicians have incorporated, and rightly so, and have other people to fill out the forms.

I think of the fall fairs and festivals: They're threatened by the red tape and the forms that they have to fill out, things they didn't have to fill out maybe 100 or 150 years ago.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I talked a little earlier about a young lady dying at 23 years old. I just want to say to my colleagues—I have a 20-year-old daughter; she's at

Brock University—when your sons or daughters go out for the first time and get a job, talk to them about health and safety.

Talk to them about exactly what their rights are under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because what you'll find is a lot of young people—we heard another case; 17 years old—are getting killed on the job or getting injured on the job. Don't always rely on the employer, who might not give them the proper health and safety training. Inform your kids and your grandkids exactly what their rights are as they go in to their first job, because I think if you take a look at the stats, you will see how many young people get injured or killed on the job. It's staggering.

The other thing I want to talk about: Today I mentioned the CAMI plant. I'm glad they brought up opening the door for auto in Niagara. I said this morning that the PCs are very clear that they said to let the auto industry die—and they did. But what I want to say around the auto sector—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Today, during my question, I mentioned in rebuttal that there hasn't been an auto assembly plant built in Ontario, and I want to correct my record on it. There has been an auto assembly plant built in Ontario, but not in the Big Three. It was the nine plants that they opened in Mexico that took the jobs away from the Big Three.

You only have to go to Windsor and look at the transmission plant that now is a parking lot. You go St. Catharines—my good friend from St. Catharines knows this; he drives by Ontario Street. It has been torn down. Do you know how many people used to work there? Four thousand. Do you know how many used to work in the transmission plant? Four thousand.

Instead of the jobs going from Ontario to Mexico, let's support the CAMI workers and keep our work right here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It seems appropriate at this time to remind the members of the purpose of questions and comments. We have four questions and comments after each significant speech that's made by a member or a group of members. The questions and comments are intended to relate back to the presentation that was made. That's the purpose of questions and comments, and I would just like to remind members of that at this time.

1750

We now go back to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who has two minutes to reply to the questions and comments that were just made.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be pleased to do that.

Before I start, I'd like to point out my good friend Steve Wong from Richmond Hill. He's a guest in the Legislature today. Stevie, thank you so much for all you do for Ontario.

I'd like to thank my colleague and friend from Windsor-Tecumseh. He referenced my fast talking. I'd

like to suggest that that would be a value-for-money audit—that I try to get as much in as I can for the great residents of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

This isn't directed at him, but a lot of the NDP have been standing up today making comments about the PCs and what we've done. The Kitchener–Waterloo member, I think, started all of this. I'm just reminding them that, as a party, they voted against two budgets and kept the Liberals in power. So a lot of the nightmares that have been occurring for the last number of years could have been avoided had they not been enablers and kept the Liberals in power.

The Minister of the Environment: I'd like to just point out that it's interesting—on the weekend I was here, as was my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, for the Great Lakes water conference, and not a Liberal member or an NDP member was there. You would think, about the environment—we want to talk about all the things; there's a lot of red tape and legislation in the environmental sphere that we could be talking about. It was interesting that, right in their backyard—most of the members in their parties are from Toronto and the GTA, and yet there were two PCs there, but not a single Liberal or a New Democrat. My colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk showed up—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: This isn't about the Legislature; this is about on the weekend, so I can talk about whatever I want.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to interrupt the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and ask him to keep his remarks tempered so as to ensure that they don't cause undue upset in the House.

Mr. Bill Walker: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to commend my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk. He talked about fall fairs and festivals, and I'm going to add small not-for-profits, particularly in rural areas like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, which are under threat and attack by this government because of unnecessary red tape and regulation.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My folks back in Windsor–Tecumseh are taking a special interest in this bill.

Just before we get too excited about the possibilities here—I know we all like to play to the crowds and say we're in favour of cutting red tape, but some red tape is good. Some is bad, but some is good. I'd like to remind you of that, and I'll do so by reading from an article published on the 1st of August in the Edmonton Journal. It was written by Mike Parker, who is the president of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. That group represents about 25,000 health care professionals. He became alarmed after two of the candidates running for the new United Conservative Party jumped on the red tape bandwagon. Brian Jean wanted to reduce what he termed “job-killing government red tape” by 33%, plus add a one-for-one clause—that for every new regulation,

an old one would have to go. Meanwhile, Doug Schweitzer campaigned on getting rid of two existing regulations for every new one that was created. Mr. Parker called them on it and reminded them of that horrific apartment tower fire in England in June. You know the one, Speaker: 80 people died at the Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Only a few months before that deadly blaze, Conservative politicians in the United Kingdom used that same language to attack regulations which they saw as obstacles to businesses being able to maximize their profits. Like here, the government announced a red tape challenge. This required civil servants to abolish two regulations for every new one introduced. Few people would like to be reminded of this, but British cabinet ministers were boasting a few months before that fire about how they had slashed fire regulations. How did they do that? Well, for one thing, where there used to be a six-hour fire safety inspection, the Conservatives cut it down to 45 minutes.

So the public was demanding answers, wanting to know if those red tape cuts and regulations led in any way to that fire in June and, if so, how they contributed to the number of dead. In the court of public opinion, tenants, industry leaders and fire safety experts all said there was a failure of government oversight at that tower.

You see, back in 2005, the government of the day changed the laws, and building owners were allowed to self-police their own fire safety standards. It used to be done by government inspectors.

Interest focused on the type of cladding used in that tower. In other countries, it was banned because of the fire risk. It was well known to be a fire risk in many other countries, but because it was much cheaper than the good stuff, industry leaders fought, and were successful in their quest, to use it in Britain.

The author of this article in the Edmonton Journal, Mike Parker, says that two of the Alberta candidates that were running at the time for the party leadership may see red tape as a bad thing for profit, but in fact, it's better seen as vitally important regulation to save lives.

Speaker, I don't know if you are aware of this or not, but supposedly, in Alberta, they have the least health and safety regulations in all of Canada.

All of the candidates in that race, including Jason Kenney, according to Mr. Parker, have been saying they'll be slashing public sector jobs.

So the leader of Alberta's unionized health care professionals asks, if there's a Grenfell Tower-like fire in the province, “Will our medical services be able to cope? As patients are rushed to hospitals, will overburdened emergency departments be able to cope? As Albertans grieve after the tragedy, will there be enough mental-health and social workers to care for them?” He fears not.

This article ended with a quote by the British singer and activist Billy Bragg, with a photo of the burned-out tower in the background. He posted: “The next time you hear someone complaining about health and safety, or whinging about too much red tape, or demanding that for

every new regulation introduced, three are removed; when you hear someone say that it just costs too much to install sprinklers or fire doors or use fire-resistant materials, that profits are more important than safety; when firefighters, police and medical staff suffer cuts; when you are told that we can have low taxes and good public services—think of this image.” Think of that image of the Grenfell Tower. “And pray for the people of Grenfell Tower.”

Speaker, it’s a sobering reminder of what could be at stake here if we cut the red tape around health and safety regulations in the province of Ontario.

At the end of March last year, the Liberal government launched what was termed a “crowd-sourced program to modernize regulations.” The public was asked “to help identify and improve regulations that are unclear, outdated, redundant or unnecessarily costly.”

Minister Duguid and the Premier went to a plastics plant in Markham to launch this so-called Red Tape Challenge. They asked the public “to pinpoint problems such as forms that are too complex” or contain technical information that is too hard to understand.

The plan, as announced, is “to help identify and eliminate regulatory duplication, lessen compliance burdens, shorten response times and make it easier for businesses and citizens to interact with government.”

The government release said that the Red Tape Challenge program is modelled on one from the United Kingdom. Mind you, Speaker, this release is dated March 29, 2016. The Grenfell Tower fire in west London was in June of this year. So no one knew, when the program was

launched, what impact the UK red tape challenge may have had—I repeat, may have had—on that deadly fire. I’m not pointing fingers; I’m merely repeating what has been published on the circumstances.

I’m almost wrapping up, Speaker, because I’m cognizant of the time.

In fact, at that time when this program was launched in Ontario, the Liberals said the red tape challenge in the UK had achieved substantial results, saving businesses about \$1.5 billion a year when 3,000 regulations were changed.

Again, I’m not pointing fingers, but there are those in this province who, rightly or wrongly, blame a former Conservative government for cuts in the civil service—fewer health and safety inspectors, for example, which, they say, led in an indirect way to dire consequences with the testing of our drinking water. There were other circumstances at play, but we all remember Walkerton.

When it comes to reducing red tape—making forms easier to understand, having fewer forms—let’s take a look at the Ontario disaster recovery assistance program the next time I have a chance to stand in this House and speak to the cutting-red-tape bill.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is 6 o’clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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